

HYBRID WARFARE: HOW TO SHAPE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

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ABSTRACT

HYBRID WARFARE: HOW TO SHAPE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES, by Major Norbert Vaczi, 103 pages.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and its allies are faced with hybrid threats, which frame Europe's and NATO's current and future security environment. One of the significant aims of the current hybrid threats posed by Russia is to create a situation where NATO and its allies cannot succeed.

The thesis examines and discusses hybrid warfare with the effort to identify the general characteristics of hybrid threats and warfare to provide crucial understanding of the current security environment and reflect on possible required instruments that play significant roles in the hybrid war. The thesis mainly reflects on events that took place since the millennium and focuses on the effectiveness of efforts concerning potential hybrid warfare threats.

The thesis does not provide ideal solutions to the problem, nor does it propose very concrete and narrow approaches to the issue. The thesis does not suggest any doctrinal changes for hybrid warfare. Neither does it suggest any direct changes to the current force structure within NATO Special Operations Forces (SOF). This paper seeks relations between hybrid warfare and NATO SOF as the primary, but not lone, military means of hybrid warfare.

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ACRONYMS

DIME	Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economy
EU	European Union
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NRF	NATO Response Force
RAP	Readiness Action Plan
SOF	Special Operations Forces
USSOCOM	U.S. Southern Command
VJTF	Very High Readiness Task Force

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is so damn complex. If you ever think you have the solution to this, you're wrong, and you're dangerous. You have to keep listening and thinking and being critical and self-critical.

— Colonel Herbert R. McMaster, quoted in David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*

Background

The Russian intervention in Crimea, Ukraine, and now the conflict in Syria are major concerns for the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In a multi-level and multi-echelon politically and socially complex environment in which the ongoing warfare is persistently changing, and one of its unique signs is the remarkable ability for integration,¹ more focused attention and mutual understanding from NATO and its member countries are required. Agendas of the 2014 NATO Summit included a renewed commitment to the transatlantic bond and a robust defense capability. The summit was initiated to reverse defense cuts and adopt NATO's Readiness Action Plan (RAP), including a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The summit urged increased support to Ukraine in the wake of the crisis with Russia and condemnation of Russia's illegal and illegitimate "annexation" of Crimea and

¹ Imre Porkoláb, "A Hadviseléssel Kapcsolatos Elméletek és Elvek Változása Napjaink Konfliktusainak Tükrében," *Honvédségi Szemle* 142, no. 6 (June 2014): 6-14, accessed November 15, 2015, www.honvedelem.hu/container/files/attachments/47524/hsz_2014_6.pdf.

destabilization of eastern Ukraine. It also urged strengthened relations with partners.² The reemergence of an aggressive Russia, marked with events in Crimea, Ukraine, and Syria, has generated extensive debate about the presence and the theory of hybrid warfare and hybrid threats. NATO continuously monitors the process, and NATO members organize their military forces for better and more adaptable force posture. The rise of hybrid threats frames the operational environment of the twenty-first century and poses a credible threat to NATO members.

Hybrid threats along NATO's flanks compel the Alliance to seek more intense relationships among military services, military intelligence, and government and non-government organizations especially the European Union (EU). On the other hand, one can also see the merging of the forms of irregular warfare³ such as guerrilla and terrorism, or the mixed use of conventional and unconventional tactics. Utilization and synchronization of these diverse forms in multiple domains and areas in conjunction with an overarching strategy sum up hybrid warfare.

Hybrid warfare is about simple but sophisticated integration, adaptation, and a unified strategy. NATO members, especially small countries in Europe and in the Baltics that suffered or are potential targets of hybrid threats, put forth efforts to catch the essentials of hybrid warfare threats. This thesis will expose possible reasons for the diverse approaches to hybrid warfare and threats.

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "Summit Meetings," last modified March 9, 2016, accessed March 21, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/nl/natohq/topics_50115.htm#.

³ Porkoláb, 6-14.

Understanding hybrid warfare provides a framework within which to think about the existing security environment generally and ensure an effective address of hybrid warfare threats. It supports political and military thinkers and decision makers in understanding their current and near future environments. It is critical for NATO to make member nations find the best way to address the strategic implications of hybrid warfare in their national military strategy and determine the way that NATO military forces will fight or counter hybrid warfare. To understand and counter such warfare and its threats is not clear-cut and is difficult to approach militarily. A comprehensive understanding of hybrid warfare theory empowers NATO member countries to develop, refine, and organize efficiently and effectively their military forces for operations in such complex environments. The presence and efficiency of Daesh,⁴ or Russia's big geopolitical "game" indicates that powers and forces quickly and efficiently change and shape today's security environments. NATO, as a collective of mutual wills, needs to act and adapt to the world's changes.

Contextual Framework

Establishment of a basic framework is necessary to understand the definitions and characteristics of hybrid activities and the security environment in which these activities occur. NATO defines hybrid warfare as a situation "where a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures are employed in a highly integrated

⁴ DAESH is an acronym for the Arabic phrase al-Dawla al-Islamiya al-Iraq al-Sham (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). Essentially, it is another word for ISIS. Nicola Oakley, "What does Daesh mean? ISIS 'threatens to cut out the tongues' of anyone using this word," *Mirror*, December 2, 2015, accessed March 19, 2016, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/what-daesh-mean-isis-threatens-6841468>.

design.”⁵ This paper seeks relations between hybrid warfare and NATO Special Operations Forces (SOF), therefore the term hybrid warfare will be used and understood throughout this thesis as NATO defined it. However, there are multiple diverse definitions for the same terms in different sources. Some of the related terms are not defined in NATO doctrine therefore at some point of this paper other relevant U.S. doctrine or research and respective theorists of the theme will be used and cited. In the absence of an official mutually agreed upon reliable definition, it is necessary to discuss hybrid warfare and threats and their characteristics in conjunction with NATO’s role, tasks, and challenges in the hybrid environment.

Problem Statement

NATO and its allies are faced with hybrid threats, which frame Europe’s and NATO’s current and future security environment. One of the significant aims of the current hybrid threats posed by Russia is to create a situation where NATO and its allies cannot succeed. How will NATO ensure that the allies’ SOF can adequately address the specific challenges of hybrid warfare threats?

Significance of the Study

The main significance of this study is to identify capabilities within NATO SOF in responding to the evolving hybrid warfare threat posed to NATO members. While nation states and non-state actors continue their physical and ideological expansion and robust “policy” distribution in an extensively complex environment, nation states

⁵ NATO, “Wales Summit Declaration,” September 5, 2014, accessed November 14, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en.

“armed” with NATO capabilities seek solutions to counter hybrid threats to safeguard their sovereignty. Although there are some restrictions to entirely understanding and countering hybrid threats, analysis of current security environment and available capabilities will empower proper integration of forces into the whole of government approach.

Research Questions

In order to answer the question in the problem statement, other, more specific research questions need to be presented and answered. The conducted research on hybrid warfare and NATO recognize SOF’s vital role in counter-unconventional warfare.

The primary question of the thesis is: how does one shape NATO SOF in order to integrate them into a national whole of government approach? The three secondary questions below will facilitate answering the main question.

What are the general characteristics of hybrid threats and warfare? This question is required in order to be able to apply different criteria in the analysis of the concept of hybrid warfare. It also will provide crucial understanding of the current security environment and will reflect on possible required instruments that play significant roles.

What are the roles of NATO SOF that complement other instruments of power in a whole of government anti-hybrid campaign? Through understanding the environment and key players’ roles, the author seeks to understand the possible limitations that might exist and affect NATO SOF’s efficiency in an anti-hybrid campaign.

What are the possible SOF adaptation approaches in the future security environment? It intends to identify and suggest possible ways and means in which NATO SOF can be utilized effectively as a sub-element of instruments of power.

Limitations and Delimitations

The purpose of this thesis is not to settle a further argument about hybrid warfare and its existence. It does not propose to verify whether there are grounds for using the term hybrid warfare or not in the NATO doctrine. This thesis, based on unclassified open sources, simply attempts to analyze a concept and its possible consequences that have been brought forward in recent academic discourse. For the analysis of the current regional security environments, this thesis will mainly reflect on events that took place since the millennium. This study will focus on the effectiveness of efforts concerning the potentiality of hybrid warfare threats. It will reveal whether or not the current efforts have clear ends, are relevant, have sufficient intensity, use the appropriate ways, and dedicate the necessary means. The thesis will not attempt to provide ideal solutions to the problem, nor will it propose very concrete and narrow approaches to the issue.

Based on the above, this thesis will not suggest any doctrinal changes for hybrid warfare. Neither will it suggest any direct changes to the current force structure within NATO SOF. Such proposals and solutions are subject to other researchers and require individual expertise in specific areas.

Assumptions

The thesis makes three assumptions.

1. Hybrid warfare will continue to evolve and be a significant threat to NATO and its allies at least for the next decade.
2. NATO's allies' expenditures on defense will remain significantly unchanged in the next decade.
3. NATO SOF has a core role in an anti-hybrid warfare.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Different areas that require systematic research are: (1) assessing the current hybrid warfare threat; (2) certain NATO allied countries' current use of Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economy (DIME) to address the problem; and (3) state and non-state actors' strategies of conducting hybrid operations. There are sufficient numbers of available open sources (books, publications, journals) written on topics related to hybrid threats, hybrid warfare, counter-hybrid operations, and nation-state and non-state hybrid strategies.

Frank G. Hoffman's Views

Many articles and papers came to light about the idea of hybrid threats, hybrid wars, or warfare as a phenomenon of the recent modern world. One prominent leading theorist of hybrid warfare is Frank G. Hoffman. Dr. Hoffman, a retired U.S. Marine Corps lieutenant colonel, is a national security analyst and Senior Research Fellow at Center for Strategic Research at the National Defense University, who has held several political appointments in the Pentagon as well. He edited and authored several books, essays, and articles centered around national security, national and military strategies, and hybrid threats.

In one of his monographs titled, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*,⁶ Hoffman analyzes the changing character of warfare and examines debates about

⁶ Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), accessed April 17, 2016,

the evolution of modern warfare. Hoffman argues that in the future, nations—the United States in particular—will face adversaries that are not only regular, or irregular, or terrorists. Instead, the future opponents are capable of and willing to use simultaneously a combination of such capabilities. Hoffman acknowledges that there have been wars in history where regular and irregular tactics have blended. He views some warfare, for instance, compound warfare and unrestricted warfare, as contributors to the hybrid warfare theory and its evolution. Hoffman also admits that today's modern technology has influenced and transformed warfare in a way that is new, and that it backs an establishment of hybrid threats. He promotes the view that the area where battles are fought against preferred enemies can not be the focus anymore. The adversaries are thinking, and campaigns rather than battles should be the preferred approach. The adversaries are gradually becoming more sophisticated and simultaneously and flexibly using available tools and elements of warfare or blending multiple types of warfare.

In one of his articles, “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges,” Hoffman argues that hybrid warfare creates an operational environment in which the United States and the West are unprepared to fight, and where the armed forces must be adaptable and must be adapted to the challenges as well.⁷ As said by Hoffman, hybrid warfare can be carried out by either state or non-state actors.⁸ Hoffman agrees that non-state actors fight hybrid wars

http://www.potomac institute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf.

⁷ Frank G. Hoffman, “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 52 (1st Quarter 2009): 34-39, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://ndupress.ndu.edu/portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-52.pdf>.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

in a modern operational environment with the lethality of state actors. The accessibility to modern weapons, in combination with modern forms of communication and interaction, makes today's non-state actors capable of targeting states more easily than before.

In his work "Hybrid vs. Compound War: The Janus Choice; Defining Today's Multifaceted Conflict,"⁹ Hoffman defines hybrid threat as, "Any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior in the battle space to obtain their political objectives."¹⁰ Although Hoffman does not define hybrid warfare, he attempts to characterize it. In one of his essays, "Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict," he says that hybrid warfare is characterized by "states or groups that select from the whole menu of tactics and technologies and blend them in innovative ways to meet their own strategic culture, geography, and aims."¹¹ Hybrid conflict includes a comprehensive employment of tactics and weapons and the combination of various tools in the same campaign.

In "The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict: Protracted, Gray Zone, Ambiguous, and Hybrid Modes of War,"¹² Hoffman examines modern conflicts. He says that,

⁹ Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid vs. Compound War, the Janus Choice: Defining Today's Multifaceted Conflict," *Armed Forces Journal* (October 2009): 1, accessed January 3, 2016, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/hybrid-vs-compound-war/>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict," *National Defense University Strategic Forum* 240 (April 2009): 5, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/14593/uploads>.

¹² Frank G. Hoffman, "The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict: Protracted, Gray Zone, Ambiguous, and Hybrid Modes of War," *2016 Index of U.S. Military Strength*

“Current perceptions about the risks of major war, our presumed preponderance of military power, a flawed understanding of irregular war.”¹³ The West’s “ingrained reliance on technological panaceas”¹⁴ such as “precision-guided munitions (PGMs) and drone warfare make serious defense planning ever harder.”¹⁵ Hoffman sees these perceptions as a misunderstanding of contemporary conflicts. The military, the political elites, and furthermore the people need to expect at least three consequences of the flawed understanding of the conflict. These consequences are that the West’s, especially the U.S. eagerness for wins at low cost is unreasonable. The lack of knowledge might lead to “An overly simplistic grasp of the application of blunt military power and what it will supposedly achieve, and naive views of both adversaries and the context for conflict.”¹⁶

In the same paper, Hoffman emphasizes the difference between gray zone conflicts and hybrid wars. He argues for the incorrectness of fusing hybrid threats with the below the threshold approach. He says, “Hybrid threats ably combine various modes of fighting in time and space, with attendant violence in the middle of the conflict

(January 2016): 25-36, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://index.heritage.org/military/2016/essays/contemporary-spectrum-of-conflict/>.

¹³ Ibid., 25.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

spectrum. Gray zone conflicts do not cross that threshold and use a different mix of methods, entirely short of bloodshed.”¹⁷

Hoffman’s overall view of modern conflicts, particularly in unconventional warfare, makes clear distinctions among gray zone and ambiguous, irregular and terrorism, hybrid, limited, and theater conventional conflicts. On Hoffman’s spectrum, these are sitting in an order where borders are blurred but still existing. For the purpose of this paper, the term hybrid threat will be used and understood as a theory, in which hybrid threat is not existing in the middle of the spectrum of conflict only, but it might be blending, overarching or encompassing other conflicts as a whole or their elements.

From a Western, U.S. perspective only Hoffman has been mentioned here. However, other scholars from North America also play a vital role in the process of understanding hybrid conflicts and threats and their views and thoughts also have been implemented in this thesis. With regards to understanding and describing hybrid warfare, non-European scholars are examining and analyzing the issue from a less Russian focused point of view, while acknowledging the Russian acts as one of the challenges to NATO and the United States. However, observing them from a more relaxed position where the geographical proximity is less important and from where NATO has not just an eastern flank, but a northern one as well, is related to the topic. Hoffman’s and other non-European views tend to follow an American (Western) way of thinking that recognizes hybrid warfare as a primarily non-military focused phenomenon; in spite of this, it suggests militarily more heavy approaches and solutions to counter hybrid conflicts and threats.

¹⁷ Hoffman, “The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict, 29.

Imants Viesturs Liegis' Views

Imants Viesturs Liegis (Lieģis) is Latvia's Ambassador to Hungary, a former Latvian Defense Minister, and a member of the Executive Board of the European Leadership Network. In the publication of "Reacting To Russia,"¹⁸ he views Russia's hybrid war as some parallel wars that encompass: the Crimean and Ukrainian events as military intervention, an ongoing economic war against Europe, and a massive information war. He sees that, "The combination of these various elements has resulted in a phenomenon described as 'hybrid war,' 'next generation warfare' or 'non-linear warfare'."¹⁹ Liegis, at the very beginning of the Ukrainian issue, already identifies and urges some possible responses. He says, "The changing nature of the hybrid war threat demands a speedy and flexible response. Deterrence must remain at the core of such a response, and it needs to take on a similarly hybrid form."²⁰ Liegis realizes the complexity of Russia's activity and pinpoints its altering nature with a non-military core. In Liegis' view, Russia's "war" can be deterred and the elements of response have to have the same hybrid nature. Liegis' suggested answers seem to be focused on immediate reactions that have the same principles and are based on the same legal fundamentals. Liegis' reaction is understandable, but the international legal background and practical executability of his ideas are questionable and unrealistic, at least in an immediate manner. Liegis' publication is part of a mutual European work with the goal to address

¹⁸ Imants Viesturs Liegis, "Reacting to Russia," European Leadership Network, October 8, 2014, accessed April 20, 2016, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/reacting-to-russia_1985.html.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

and emphasize the ongoing Russian activities in the neighborhood of Europe. Despite Liegis' perceived immediate solution, he understands and points out that an effective deterrence has to have certain preconditions. Based on previous related actions in other countries, like Georgia and Estonia, he mentions a stronger and more constant commitment of Latvia, and other nations, on NATO guidelines of 2 percent of gross domestic product spending on defense; or NATO and the EU's stable and continuous response to Russia's activities.

Janis Berzins Views

With regards to Russia's activities, especially those that directly tie to Europe and the Baltics, Janis Berzins (Jānis Bērziņš), the Managing Director at the Center for Security and Strategic Research, National Defence Academy of Latvia needs to be mentioned. Berzins has completed his Ph.D. in Political Science at Latvian University (Latvijas Universitāte) and he does some important work on better understanding the Russian and European relationship and assessment of Russian modern warfare and its possible consequences and implications. Berzins, in his works titled "Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy,"²¹ in April 2014, and "Russian New Generation Warfare: Implications for Europe,"²² in October 2014, makes an assessment about Russian New Generation Warfare, its characteristics,

²¹ Janis Berzins, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy* (Policy Paper No. 2, National Defence Academy of Latvia Center for Security and Strategic Research, Latvia, April 2014).

²² Janis Berzins, "Russian New Generation Warfare: Implications for Europe," European Leadership Network, October 14, 2014, accessed April 20, 2016, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/russian-new-generation-warfare-implications-for-europe_2006.html.

and possible goals. He points out, “The key element of the Russian strategy is the notion that the war is essentially staged in the minds of the participants. In other words, conceptual support for war, both at home and in the country being attacked, is critical to gain victory. Thus, asymmetric and non-linear warfare’s objective is the creation of a sociopolitical environment conducive to destroying the opponent’s economic and political structures.”²³ Berzins does not call the Russian activities hybrid. However, he describes and characterizes it as warfare that blends and encompasses other different warfare, such as asymmetric and non-linear. In his works, Berzins analyzes the Russian strategy and its possible ends, ways, and means. Based on previous, primarily Russian, publications Berzins schematizes the Russian New Generation Warfare into eight phases. In his works, Berzins describes well all military, political, informational, economic domains, and Russia’s possible objectives. He also recommends some meaningful solutions to counter such a threat and warfare. He says that one of the basic steps that European countries need to take is “establishing a coherent and clear European defense policy.”²⁴ Berzins understands and clearly articulates that “Russia’s strategic objectives are not uniform regarding all European countries; therefore there is no universal prescription to counter Russia’s actions.”²⁵ He also shares the view that the military has a key role in the Russian warfare. “However, the new form of warfare focuses on asymmetric operations, including information warfare and a struggle for influence. As a result, the task of countering it relies mostly on the shoulders of non-military security

²³ Berzins, “Russian New Generation Warfare: Implications for Europe.”

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

structures.”²⁶ One of Berzins’ core messages and suggestions is that democracy is important to and an essential element of Europe. “Thus, although some might be tempted to employ harsher methods to deal with Russia’s New Generation Warfare, this cannot be accepted.”²⁷ He recognizes and envisions the importance of resilience and a mutually honest education when he says, “The only way to deal with this sort of warfare is more democracy. This means more neutral information, better analysis, more honest and transparent politicians, and wider education about the threat.”²⁸

Berzins’s views provide a more European than Western (U.S.) style assessment that is eager to examine an issue from a broader perspective. He sees, probably correctly, that hybrid threats, despite their names and categorization, can be deterred in ways that center around a non-military core and are based on a cohesive, resilient Europe and NATO.

The literature mentioned above provides a solid understanding of hybrid warfare, particularly about its Russian mode. Since the topic could overextend available sources, the possibility to discuss all details would be impossible. The ones that provide deep academic thoughts from a different perspective are mentioned here. Authors of these are scholars, policy thinkers, and makers of the subject who have credibility and insights on the topic.

European literature views Russia’s activities very closely and is handling them with extreme care. These, sometimes seemingly suspicious, analyses and assessments

²⁶ Berzins, “Russian New Generation Warfare: Implications for Europe.”

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

clearly reflect on the historical and recent tense relationship among the actors. The majority of the suggestions urge responses and immediate reactions that are understandably based on their direct or most probable involvement of conflicts. The European literature calls for immediate or short-term solutions but provides a broader and less hard-power centric approach. The European cohesion aligned with a strong NATO relationship is in the middle of a primary non-military approach. Most of the European literature of the topic is urging joint EU-NATO involvement. However, based on their geographic location to Russia or their political and economic influence in Europe, their recommended approaches are biased. Furthermore, most European literature tends to see, describe, and categorize hybrid—some might call it different—as a uniquely Russian way of war. Therefore, understanding and providing efficient and meaningful answers, and identifying strategies for hybrid challenges requires a broader scope. The identification of the ends, ways, and means should not be Russia-focused only in anti-hybrid activities.

NATO's View on Hybrid Warfare

NATO literature discusses hybrid warfare with the intention to understand the phenomenon and to find proper solutions to successfully counter hybrid warfare threats. Similarly to European countries and the EU, NATO members' views and suggested approaches vary based on the particular countries' geographical location, capabilities and historical, emotional connection to a certain hybrid actor.

One of the related publications is the “Wales Summit Declaration”²⁹ of the North Atlantic Council. The Declaration, among other issues and NATO concerns, deals with

²⁹ NATO, “Wales Summit Declaration.”

hybrid warfare threats. It sets the stage for further fundamental steps of the Alliance. It talks about the condemnation of “Russia’s illegal and illegitimate ‘annexation’ of Crimea and destabilisation of eastern Ukraine.”³⁰ It also speaks of the NATO requirement to strengthen partnership through the Partnership Interoperability Initiative, and initiatives “to reverse defence cuts and adoption of a Readiness Action Plan, including a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force.”³¹ One of the declaration’s goals is to make sure that NATO has the essential tools and procedures to effectively address hybrid warfare threats and their challenges.

The participants of the summit view hybrid warfare as a threat towards the Alliance that needs to be deterred. The summit identifies reinforced capabilities of national forces, enhanced strategic communication, and strengthened coordination between NATO and other organizations as keys for efficient and adequate responses. The declaration welcomes “the establishment of the NATO-accredited Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Latvia as a meaningful contribution to NATO’s efforts”³² to address hybrid warfare threats.

The declaration of the NATO Wales Summit does not define but describes hybrid warfare threats as phenomenon “where a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures are employed in a highly integrated design.”³³ The summit and its declaration provide some key aspects to understanding hybrid warfare

³⁰ NATO, “Summit Meetings.”

³¹ Ibid.

³² NATO, “Wales Summit Declaration.”

³³ Ibid.

threats and their perceived challenges to the Alliance. NATO identifies some significant vulnerabilities of the Alliance that need to be strengthened or fixed to get a cohesive and capable organization that is able and skilled to opposing such threats. The NATO Wales Summits Declaration does not mention the Russian or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant acts aligned with the term hybrid warfare. The declaration identifies specific challenges of hybrid warfare threats to NATO without calling out their actors. It is somehow understandable from an organization that encompasses the views, intentions, and challenges of more than 28 different countries and their allies. However, in some cases, it leaves more questions to be asked than answered. The NATO Declaration identifies “specific challenges posed by hybrid warfare threats”³⁴ and marks some key domains where NATO needs to act.

The declaration came out five months after the Crimean annexation, which might not be sufficient time to analyze, assess, and identify solutions in a meaningful strategy. Though, the NATO Wales Summit does not attempt to be an executive order to NATO or its member nations. It provides milestones and serves as a fundamental basis for further detailed NATO strategy. For instance, NATO made it clear in the Wales Summit Declaration that cyber-attacks can be a trigger for an Article 5 response. The declaration, most probably correctly, does not view hybrid threats as a unique Russian tool to counter NATO. However, it does recognize that countering such threats, despite its primary executor, requires NATO to take some immediate and longer term changes and adjustments to be the allied force that opposes hybrid threats. The assurance measures of the declaration, like for instance the VJTF, are immediate reactions to the threats only.

³⁴ NATO, “Wales Summit Declaration.”

Quick reaction military forces are not sufficient enough to deal with hybrid threats, and they do not offer a long-term solution for the problem.

For the purpose of this paper, the NATO Wales Summit's Declaration provides tendencies, senses, and milestones that help further analyzing and assessing hybrid warfare. Furthermore, the declaration delivers an understanding of the environment in which NATO is navigating to create a new NATO strategy.

NATO Approaches to Hybrid Threats

A report titled, *NATO's New Strategy: Stability Generation*³⁵ examines how and what NATO, as an originally Cold War era institution, can do with the twenty-first-century security challenges in Europe, the Middle East, and in the domain of cyberspace. The publication intends to cover the issues that are facing NATO and to develop a better understanding of NATO strategy. The report highlights some critical challenges of NATO and covers some responses to address those challenges. It describes and recommends an overall new NATO strategy that is called stability generation. The report acknowledges that NATO has elements of the required strategy, but they do not cover all aspects of recent challenges. The report says, "The Alliance, given the new strategic landscape it currently finds itself in, requires a new strategy."³⁶ NATO, which has three core tasks—collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security—is working on these basic tasks without having a strategy. It suggests that despite the accomplished

³⁵ Franklin D. Kramer, Hans Binnendijk, and Daniel S. Hamilton, *NATO's New Strategy: Stability Generation* (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council of the United States, 2015), accessed April 5, 2016, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/natos_new_strategy_web.pdf.

³⁶ Ibid., 3.

important objectives in the past, the given NATO core tasks are not strategies. Thus, “they do not identify the full spectrum of ends, ways, and means, and therefore do not tell the Alliance and its members either what to do or the risks involved.”³⁷

With regards to the critical challenges of NATO, the report emphasizes, “Deciding on NATO’s strategic ends requires looking at the critical challenges facing NATO.”³⁸ It continues, “The key current problems are substantial and well-known.”³⁹ The report identifies four critical challenges. These challenges are Russia in the East, as “a source of instability and a strategic adversary.”⁴⁰ Syria and Iraq as the most immediate threats that pose instability arising from both Syria and Iraq.⁴¹ The Mediterranean and the south, which encompass Libya and Mali as active conflicts and a source of instability that includes “the problem of violent Islamic extremism.”⁴² Lastly, the resilience challenge that “arises because of the multiple threats of hybrid warfare, which can take many forms.”⁴³

The report admits that the Wales Summit in 2014, aligned with the NATO defense ministerial meeting in June 2015, were significant responses to the particular challenges. Among many others, the report mentions the RAP, the VJTF, the NATO

³⁷ Kramer, Binnendijk, and Hamilton, 3.

³⁸ Ibid., 4.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Force Integration Units, and the cyber domain related initiatives that are sensible steps in the face of the challenges. Furthermore, the report highlights that these steps “are only the first steps and in themselves are insufficient to adequately resolve current issues.”⁴⁴

Kramer, aligned with the other co-authors of the report, assesses that, “The most fundamental issues relate to operational readiness, hybrid warfare, instability in neighboring countries, and resilience.”⁴⁵ The report well specifies and advocates a new NATO strategy, called stability generation. It concludes that, “NATO needs to adopt this new strategy of stability generation based on collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security with the additional task of resilience and the concomitant capabilities necessary to promote success in the twenty-first century.”⁴⁶

The report includes views of scholars and policy makers who critically analyze NATO and its actions. The report provides insights on issues and possible NATO solutions that add depth to this thesis. The takeaways of the reports are that, as preconditions, NATO needs to identify clearly its challenges to proceed on a rigorous and detailed strategy development. The identification and implementation of ends, ways, and means in any strategy would weaken the success of the strategy if they did not line up with a proper risk assessment.

The challenges of NATO strategy development as a process are that member nations of NATO hold a different level of advantages and disadvantages and have, sometimes, very different capabilities that they can bring to the table. To proactively act,

⁴⁴ Kramer, Binnendijk, and Hamilton, 6.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 16.

or rapidly react in a continuously evolving security environment, where not just the threats and challenges of adversaries take place, but internal intents and capability differences are colliding as well, makes NATO's tasks, objectives, and strategies complex and tough. Strategy development, especially in such a complex environment, takes time and requires NATO member nations to be patient. NATO, its member nations, and its allies need to all be aware and prepared to act rapidly and more efficiently. NATO policies and doctrine have to be in place to counter Russia's new way of warfare and doctrine successfully.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Defence and Security Committee issued a general report in 2015, titled *Hybrid Warfare: NATO's New Strategic Challenge?*⁴⁷ With regards to the purpose of this paper, it is worth mentioning here because it is describing NATO's immediate views on hybrid warfare, its definitions, and its direct links and implications to NATO's structure and approach. The report sees NATO being challenged from both the east and south. It says that this dual challenge "puts NATO in a position of facing two distinct strategic threats"⁴⁸ and that this requires NATO to implement different strategies for each threat. With regards to the challenges that are facing NATO from its eastern and southern flank, the report says, "A key element of the tactics of both competitors on the eastern and southern flanks is their ability to use hybrid warfare tactics."⁴⁹ After a description of the historical background and origin of hybrid warfare,

⁴⁷ Julio Miranda Calha, *Hybrid Warfare: NATO's New Strategic Challenge?* (General Report, Defence and Security Committee, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2015), accessed March 20, 2016, <http://www.nato-pa.int/shortcut.asp?FILE=4202>.

⁴⁸ Calha, 2.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

the report attempts to identify a weakness of hybrid warfare. It says, “An inherent weakness of hybrid warfare, however, is that it often involves the use of a range of tactics without a strategy, which causes its adherents problems in the long-term.”⁵⁰ After this, the report continues with a bit of a controversial statement about a weakness of hybrid warfare: “There is no uniform definition of hybrid warfare, as there is no uniformity in the way it is and can be used.”⁵¹ Then it says that the committee “defines it as the use of asymmetrical tactics to probe for and exploit weaknesses via non-military means (such as political, informational, and economic intimidation and manipulation) and are backed by the threat of conventional and unconventional military means. The tactics can be scaled and tailored fit to the particular situation.”⁵² It seems that more than one year after Russia’s significant message to the world, one of NATO’s high political organizations is still struggling to define its own challenges and therefore delaying to answer the threats that hybrid warfare holds. The report declares that there is no uniform definition of hybrid warfare, and there is no uniformity in the ways it can be carried out. However, it clearly identifies an inherent weakness and a key strength of hybrid warfare. This seemingly ambiguous way of assessment is labeling well the atmosphere in which NATO is struggling to find its roots to providing acceptable answers and developing an efficient strategy for counter hybrid warfare. The report offers a definition of hybrid warfare that is over simplifying a complex phenomenon. It views hybrid warfare as a chain of asymmetrical tactics that are being carried out by non-military means only and in which

⁵⁰ Calha, 3.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

the military means have a support role only. These views might be less precise but describe well the asymmetrical, unconventional essence of hybrid warfare.

In the context of describing Russia's manipulative and ambiguous acts, the report mentions the term gray zone. It says that "Russia seeks to create an ambiguous grey zone along NATO's eastern flank."⁵³ It seems that the report understands gray zone as an act or chain of different acts. This view is somehow controversial or at least differs from the opinion of the author of this thesis who thinks that gray zone is a space where the acts are being carried out.

The report provides a sense that the role of the military in hybrid warfare is active but emphasized the support of other instruments. It also highlights the importance of NATO SOF, particularly the increased role of NATO Special Operations Headquarters. The report views the NATO member states' SOF role in the VJTF and critically highlights that "there is perhaps too much focus on the direct action capabilities of SOF and not enough on their ability to provide military assistance to both member states and NATO partners."⁵⁴

The report's view on NATO SOF's current role and focus might have a valid basis. However, the way the report, and in this case the committee, articulates it might be a narrowed view on NATO SOF's role in hybrid warfare. To grasp NATO SOF and its role in hybrid warfare as only being able to and capable of providing situational awareness through military assistance is seemingly a sign of misunderstanding of hybrid

⁵³ Calha, 3.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

warfare and a disregarding of NATO SOF's potentials and capabilities that are way beyond its given NATO core tasks.

In the literature of hybrid warfare, from both independent and NATO circles the term gray zone, shows up as an independent or complementary element of hybrid warfare theory. From the Special Operations perspective, the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), and particularly General Joseph L. Votel, discusses the term gray zone. The USSOCOM White Paper titled "The Gray Zone,"⁵⁵ discusses that the West, particularly the United States, have a well-developed understanding of war and peace. The understanding of these terms stands on pillars of mental models, doctrine, and vocabularies. However, the area in between war and peace, the gray zone is less defined and understood. In the context to describe the challenges of the U.S. SOF with regards to the national security environment of the United States, the paper defines gray zone challenges as "competitive interactions among and within state and non-state actors that fall between the traditional war and peace duality."⁵⁶ The gray zone challenges are characterized by ambiguous nature of the conflict, clouded actors involved and uncertain goals framed with ambiguous laws and policies. The paper discusses the conflicts of the contemporary world as where traditional war is the paradigm, and gray zone conflict is becoming the norm.

The white paper and its explanation of gray zone provide a U.S. perspective of the occurrence. It defines the gray zone as conflicts that are between traditional war and

⁵⁵ Capt Philip Kapusta, "The Gray Zone" (White Paper, U.S. Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, FL, September 9, 2015), accessed April 30, 2016, <https://db.tt/2h0viarh>.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1.

peace. It supports the purpose of this thesis by providing a detailed view of Special Operations contemporary environment and challenges. Since “The current international order is largely a Westphalian construct, emphasizing human rights, free-market economies, sovereignty of the nation-state, representative government and self-determination,”⁵⁷ the paper and its conclusions about gray zone might help in understanding other nations and organizations related security environments and challenges.

An implied thought of the author of this thesis from the USSOCOM White Paper is that, based on its given doctrinal background, gray zone conflicts as an unconventional warfare concept might be posing extra challenges for NATO SOF.

Among the USSOCOM White Paper provided conflicts, only seven of them were declared wars. That drives to an issue of, if everything is in the gray zone, then nothing is. In the publication of Michael J. Mazarr, “Mastering the Gray Zone,”⁵⁸ the author draws on and cites only conflicts whose intent is revisionist like Russia or China, seeking to avoid escalation of the conventional war. In his work, Mazarr argues that the limitations of an adversary’s gray zone strategies, like the significant potential costs, “mean that an effective response can be mounted”⁵⁹ by friendly forces.

⁵⁷ Kapusta, 4.

⁵⁸ Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2015), accessed May 8, 2016, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/download.cfm?q=1303>.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 5.

Russian Perspectives on Warfare

With regards to hybrid warfare theory, one of the key articles is General Valery Gerasimov's "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations."⁶⁰ The article provides the perspective of Gerasimov on the subjects of the Russian security spheres and warfare that covers recent past, present, and future conflicts, their environments, and approaches. The article is often cited in the West as Gerasimov's Doctrine and interpreted as a leading description of a new Russian way of war.

Gerasimov studies wars and conflicts, and their environments, examines the lessons of these conflicts, and envisions the future security environment in which Russia and the Russian Armed Forces need to act. Gerasimov sees that the security environment changes and new trends are emerging. As one of his duties Gerasimov examines the security environment from the perspective of a military man but he is aware that the objects of his examination may not be tied to military conflicts only. In the context of the lessons of the Arab Spring he says, "The very 'rules of war' have changed. The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness."⁶¹

Gerasimov understands that events like the Arab Spring will be the typical warfare of the twenty-first century. He sees that the applied methods of conflicts have already altered,

⁶⁰ Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying Out Combat Operations," *Military Review* (January-February 2016): 23-29, accessed March 26, 2016, <https://www.joomag.com/magazine/military-review-english-edition-january-february-2016/0967230001451491844?page=6>.

⁶¹ Ibid., 24.

political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military measures are the preferred primary methods in conflicts and warfare. In the examination of the changes in the character of warfare, he admits that, “while we understand the essence of traditional military actions carried out by regular armed forces, we have only a superficial understanding of asymmetrical forms and means.”⁶²

Gerasimov emphasizes that the task of military science is to create a system of armed defense. He takes conflicts as examples from different domains of warfare and says, “all confirm the importance of creating a system of armed defense of the interests of the state outside the borders of its territory.”⁶³ Gerasimov points out that although the Russian federal law allows “the operational use of the Armed Forces of Russia outside of its borders, [however] the forms and means of their activity are not defined.”⁶⁴

Gerasimov sees and describes war as something that is much more than just a military conflict. He describes the roles of military and non-military methods in interstates conflict in detail and views the correlation of them as four to one (4:1). Contrary to the West’s view, Gerasimov considers the non-military measures like economic sanctions, disruption of diplomatic ties, and political and diplomatic pressure as ways of war.

⁶² Gerasimov, 25.

⁶³ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

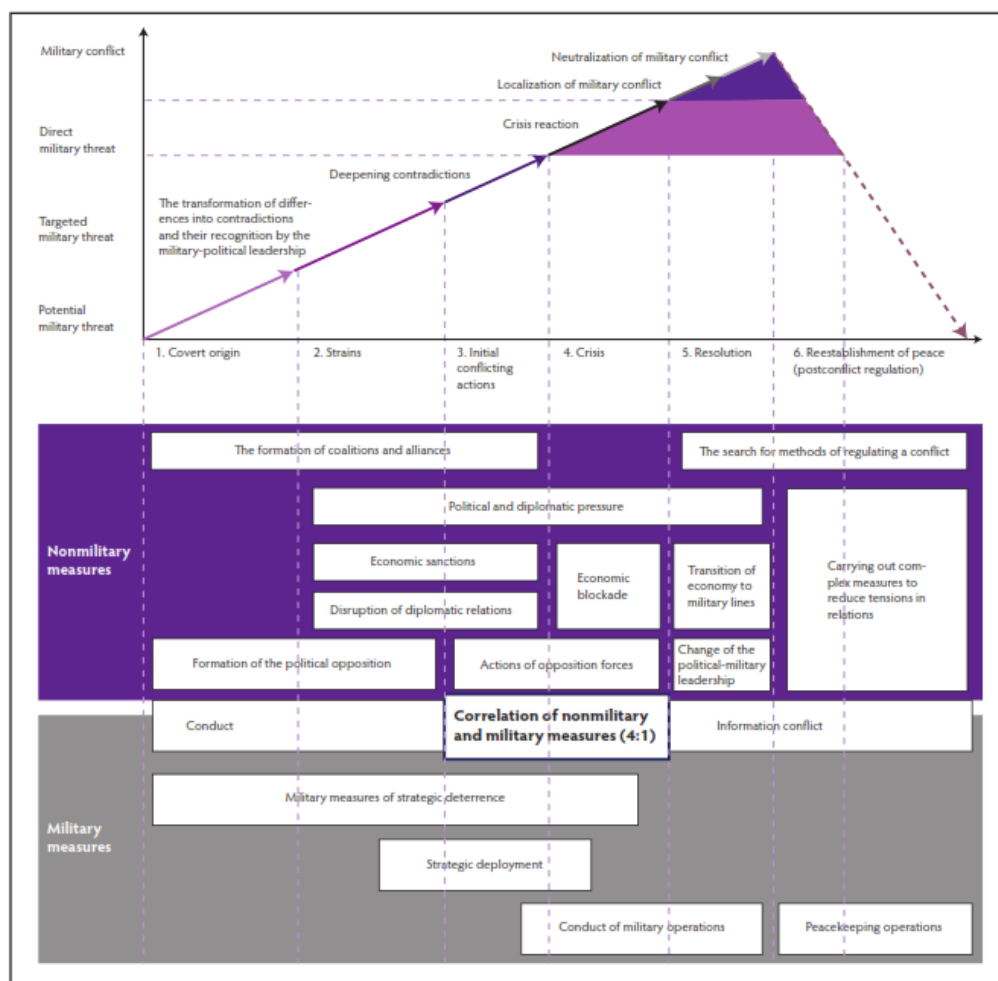


Figure 1. The Role of Non-military Methods

Source: Valery Gerasimov, “The Value of Science Is in the Foresight New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying Out Combat Operations,” *Military Review* (January-February 2016): 24, accessed March 26, 2016, <https://www.joomag.com/magazine/military-review-english-edition-january-february-2016/0967230001451491844?page=6>.

Gerasimov says, “Each war does present itself as a unique case, demanding the comprehension of its particular logic, its uniqueness.”⁶⁵ Because of that, it is hard to predict conditions of war. Gerasimov sees the position of the Russian military

⁶⁵ Gerasimov, 29.

realistically and calls for action by saying, “We must not copy foreign experience and chase after leading countries, but we must outstrip them and occupy leading positions ourselves.”⁶⁶

General Gerasimov’s article does not use the term or talk about hybrid warfare. However, his assessment of the recent past security environment and the challenges and capabilities of the Russian Armed Forces gives a better understanding of NATO adversaries’ methods and approaches from an active and fresh Russian military leader perspective. For the purpose of this paper, Gerasimov’s article will be used complementarily with other Russian military and non-military views to add depth and a better understanding of hybrid warfare, its nature, and some driven ideology.

Gerasimov on Countering Hybrid War

An essay of Timothy Thomas titled, “Gerasimov on Countering Hybrid War,”⁶⁷ discusses and assesses Gerasimov’s annual presentation to the Academy of Military Science in 2016. Gerasimov says that in modern day conflict, “the emphasis on the methods of fighting moves toward the complex application of political, economic, information, and other nonmilitary means, carried out with the support of military force.”⁶⁸ He calls these factors hybrid methods. He points out that the essence of hybrid methods “is to attain political goals with minimal armed impact through undermining an

⁶⁶ Gerasimov, 29.

⁶⁷ Timothy Thomas, “Gerasimov on Countering Hybrid War,” *OEWATCH - Foreign News and Perspectives of the Operational Environment* 6, no. 4 (April 2016): 75-76, accessed April 22, 2016, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/>.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

adversary's military and economic potential, exerting information-psychological pressure, actively supporting a domestic opposition, and using insurgency or subversive methods.”⁶⁹ He says, “States under hybrid aggression are relegated to conditions of chaos, domestic political crisis, and economic collapse. Thus, Russia must confront them.”⁷⁰ He also points out, “Trends in the evolution of hybrid war indicate that changes must be instituted in the organization of defense, and must include not just the military but all organs of authority.”⁷¹ Gerasimov puts forward that to counter or deter hybrid methods a country's military and civilian resources must both be mobilized. Cooperation with other foreign countries and organizations can be an external source of deterrence of hybrid methods through a demonstration of solidarity. Gerasimov notes that applying joint institutional groups and sequences of military and non-military actions must be considered in crisis situations.⁷²

Gerasimov's recent opinions give supplementary insights to this thesis through the Russian military high leadership's interpretation and thoughts on hybrid war. Two years after the Crimean annexation, Gerasimov describes the Russian New Generation Warfare's methods as hybrid and provides some valuable thoughts about likely possible ways to counter or deter the hybrid threat. By comparing General Gerasimov's “suggestion” to NATO's approach and its new strategy, at some point one might see some matching points or at least close similarities. The essay and Gerasimov's “updated”

⁶⁹ Thomas, 75.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

views on hybrid threats and their counter methods set a firm foundation for a better understanding of the hybrid environment and about the driving forces of strategy development.

Conclusion

The literature review covers several views on hybrid warfare, unconventional and gray zone conflicts and related areas. It contains views on possible state and non-state actors of such warfare and attempts to identify key political and military institutions that might be carrying or be countering hybrid threats. The literature review broadly covers the engines and fuels of contemporary security conflicts. It encloses strategies and essential elements of strategies, such as ends, ways, and means that are fundamentals to identify risk and successfully oppose hybrid threats. The literature review provides a broad scope and understanding of methods that are important to building an understanding of the definition of hybrid warfare and its effect on NATO.

Based on the literature review it is the opinion of the author of this paper that a few important differences set hybrid warfare apart from other conflicts.

1. It seems that fighting in hybrid warfare does not require both conventional and unconventional forces. An adversary, such as Hezbollah, can fight hybrid warfare by employing conventional and unconventional tactics. There is no need for two separate forces; a single opponent can create a hybrid threat and wage hybrid warfare despite its state or non-state fundamentals.
2. Hybrid warfare, especially in the way Russia applies and wages it, is more than the presence and use of regular and irregular warfare. It is the combination of the two or even more by adding adaptive and flexible activities or warfare from

diplomacy, information, economy, strategic communication, or other instruments' toolboxes.

Nations, members and allies of NATO in Europe seek to counter Russia's hybrid warfare concept through their existing defense structures, and in some cases with limited defense expenditure. A key issue that the above literature brought to light is that although both NATO's and countries' initiatives have taken some countermeasures to demonstrate a credible level of adaptation, they all share the common theme that they are based on current understanding of warfare.

Among many others, NATO is seeking to find solutions for issues like:

1. Intelligence and information sharing among different military and civilian organizations.
2. Situational awareness of member states to assess and understand certain signs or situations in the same way.
3. Speed of units' employment and deployment but more importantly, the speed of decision making of military and civilian authorities at all level.

A thoughtful understanding of strategy, characteristics of hybrid warfare and their relation to NATO member European nations, requires the definition of hybrid warfare and beyond. Therefore, the next chapter of this thesis will attempt to provide a comprehensive environment of definitions and methodology.

CHAPTER 3

DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Definitions

The definitions provided here are those that the author thinks merit a greater extent of attention as they are key components of the thesis. The essence of hybrid warfare is certainly the meaning of the word hybrid: a real mixture of different means of war, both conventional and irregular, dominating the physical battlefield and beyond with extensive information and media control, including possible means to reduce one's exposure. It could contain the need to deploy hard military power, with the goal of breaking an opponent's will and eliminating the population's support for its legal authorities.

Hybrid conflicts are complex and sophisticated and can come into play at every level of the spectrum of conflicts, from the tactical to the strategic. Both states and non-state actors, with or without state sponsorship, can be stakeholders in a hybrid conflict. They are adaptive and flexible and use a wide range of means to express a political or ideological message to the world that disregards international laws or norms.

Hybrid threats and hybrid warfare are terms that are often used in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the Daesh campaign in the Middle East. The majority of policy-makers and senior military decision-makers struggle to grasp what these terms mean for national and international security. Comparing the different levels of intensity of threats and intentions of actors involved creates a possibility to distinguish between hybrid threat, hybrid conflict, and hybrid war.

Hybrid Threats

The term hybrid threat is often used interchangeably with hybrid war. Both are interconnected by the nature of related challenges, for example ethnic conflicts, terrorism, or weak institutions. They complement each other by the variety of actors involved such as regular and irregular forces or criminal groups, and a mixture of conventional and unconventional means used.

The U.S. Army, in Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, defines hybrid threats as:

the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorist forces, criminal elements, or a combination of these forces and elements all unified to achieve mutually benefiting effects. Hybrid threats may involve nation-state adversaries that employ protracted forms of warfare, possibly using proxy forces to coerce and intimidate, or nonstate actors using operational concepts and high-end capabilities traditionally associated with nation-states.⁷³

NATO defines hybrid threats broadly as “those posed by adversaries, with the ability to simultaneously employ conventional and non-conventional means adaptively in pursuit of their objectives.”⁷⁴ The Alliance, in Allied Joint Doctrine AJP-01 (D), reflects hybrid threats among other threats as likely possible future threats that will be “used by a determined adversary in a simultaneous and coordinated manner”⁷⁵ against NATO “to

⁷³ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 2011), 4.

⁷⁴ Michael Miklaucic, “NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat,” NATO, September 23, 2011, accessed January 3, 2016, <http://www.act.nato.int/nato-countering-the-hybrid-threat>.

⁷⁵ Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Development, Concepts, and Doctrine), NATO, AJP-01 (D), *Allied Joint Doctrine* (Brussels, Belgium: NATO Standardization Agency, December 2010), 2-6, accessed April 23, 2016, [http://nso.nato.int/nso/zpublic/ap/ajp-01\(d\).pdf](http://nso.nato.int/nso/zpublic/ap/ajp-01(d).pdf).

exploit Alliance vulnerabilities wherever possible.”⁷⁶ Patryk Pawlak, a Polish senior analyst of the European Union Institute for Security Studies, views hybrid threats through NATO glasses with European lenses, as a metaphor that brings complexities and dilemmas related to a changing global environment to the fore.⁷⁷

Defining hybrid threat is difficult. The term “hybrid” refers to something heterogeneous in origin or composition (a mixture or a blend), or something that has “two different types of components performing the same function.”⁷⁸ The theory of hybrid threat and warfare itself was promoted by Frank G. Hoffman during the early 2000s in a series of articles and books. Hoffmann precisely defined hybrid threat as “any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behavior in the battle space to obtain their political objectives.”⁷⁹

Although hybrid threats are defined, described, and characterized in different ways, some examples of hybrid threats can prove meaningful to better understanding such a threat:

⁷⁶ Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Development, Concepts, and Doctrine), NATO, AJP-01 (D), 2-6.

⁷⁷ Patryk Pawlak, “Understanding Hybrid Threats,” *European Parliamentary Research Service Blog*, June 24, 2015, accessed January 3, 2016, <http://epthinktank.eu/2015/06/24/understanding-hybrid-threats/>.

⁷⁸ Merriam-Webster, “Hybrid,” accessed January 3, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hybrid>.

⁷⁹ Hoffman, “Hybrid vs. Compound War, the Janus Choice: Defining Today’s Multifaceted Conflict,” 1.

1. Terrorism and terrorist organizations like Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda or Daesh (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), are threats to sovereign countries. To achieve their political goals, they operate worldwide and employ different economic, military and technological tools.
2. Organized crime carried out by armed criminal groups and drug cartels destroys security and causes adverse impacts on the states' economy. As a multinational alliance, NATO is particularly concerned with transnational criminal organizations.
3. Resource scarcity: resource-dependency between countries is increasingly used for political purposes. Russia's refusal to adopt an oil-sharing agreement with Ukraine and other European countries put additional pressure on bilateral and multilateral relations.
4. Covert operations like Russia's strategic use of Special Forces and information in Ukraine.

A hybrid threat uniquely focuses on organizational capability and generally attempts to gain an asymmetrical advantage over purely conventional opponents within a specific environment.

Hybrid Conflicts and Hybrid Wars

The situations where hybrid threats evolve are hybrid conflicts or hybrid wars. Pawlak describes the hybrid conflict as a situation in which parties refrain from the overt use of armed forces against each other, relying instead on a combination of military intimidation (falling short of attack), exploitation of economic and political vulnerabilities, and diplomatic or technological means to pursue their objectives. He

distinguishes and describes hybrid war as a situation in which a country resorts to the overt use of armed forces against another country or a non-state actor, in addition to a mix of other means (i.e. economic, political, and diplomatic).⁸⁰

Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare is a New Generation Warfare that most probably will dominate through the next decade and will challenge NATO. In 2014, Captain Robert A. Newson defined hybrid warfare as:

a combination of conventional, irregular, and asymmetric means, including the persistent manipulation of political and ideological conflict, and can include the combination of special operations and conventional military forces; intelligence agents; political provocateurs; media representatives; economic intimidation; cyber-attacks; and proxies and surrogates, para-militaries, terrorist, and criminal elements.⁸¹

The *Military Balance 2015* provides a more descriptive definition for hybrid warfare and describes it as “sophisticated campaigns that combine low-level conventional and special operations; offensive cyber and space actions; and psychological operations that use social and traditional media to influence popular perception and international opinion.”⁸²

⁸⁰ Pawlak, “Understanding Hybrid Threats,” *European Parliamentary Research Service Blog*.

⁸¹ Robert A. Newson, “Why the US Needs a Strategy to Counter ‘Hybrid Warfare’,” *Defense One*, October 23, 2014, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2014/10/why-us-needs-strategy-counter-hybrid-warfare/97259/>.

⁸² International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2015* (Milton Park, Abington, Oxfordshire: Routledge for International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2015), accessed January 10, 2016, <https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/military%20balance/issues/the-military-balance-2015-5ea6/mb2015-01-essay-hybrid-warfare-9ec7>.

Characteristics of Hybrid Warfare

“The essential purpose of hybrid warfare is to keep an adversary politically, militarily and societally off-balance.”⁸³ Hybrid warfare is a denial and defection form of standard norms and principles of international relations in pursuit of narrow interests.⁸⁴ The aim of hybrid warfare is to keep war below the threshold of a reaction from traditional defense institutions and organizations. The strategy of hybrid warfare is deliberately designed that employs a mix of propaganda, destabilizing maneuver, and terror to force an adversary to comply with those interests. Hybrid warfare demonstrates both conventional and irregular characteristics.

Hybrid warfare plays out at all levels of war, from the tactical to the operational and up to the strategic. Some features of modern hybrid warfare are:

1. The aim is to control the minds. Primarily control the minds of the political leadership and the population through propaganda (psychological operations), misleading campaigns, and pressure by terror.
2. Use alternative means to achieve goals. The primary roles in attaining the aims of war are carried out by non-military means such as psychological operations and propaganda. Furthermore, economic sanctions, criminal and terrorist activities, can be mentioned as an alternative to achieve goals.

⁸³ Julian Lindley-French, “NATO and New Ways of Warfare: Defeating Hybrid Threats” (NATO Defense College Conference Report, Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome, April 29-30, 2015), accessed January 3, 2016, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/downloads.php?icode=453>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

3. Prioritization. Prioritizing non-military tools of subversion and conducting secret warfare. Irregular forces conduct military operations in secret by combining different methods against whole societies. Irregular forces target and engage political structures, resident administrations, economy, the morale of the population along with the armed forces.
4. Ties with belligerents. Some degree of the ethnic or linguistic link provides opportunities for the aggressor to insert into the society of the target less visibly.
5. Below the radar. The aim of hybrid warfare is to keep war below the threshold of a reaction from traditional defense institutions and organizations.
6. Blurred lines. Lines among state and non-state actors, state-on-state wars, counterinsurgency conflicts or terrorism, and cyber-attacks are complex and fuzzy.
7. Simultaneous. Elements applied simultaneously and adaptively, in time and space.
8. Active use of irregular warfare.

Hybrid war, in general, includes three stages. First, identify a given situation in a victim-state, then through the crisis, stimulate the domestic conflict in a favored way. Second, degrade, destroy, and disintegrate the country to convert it to a so-called “incompetent” state. Third, change a political power for the one that is entirely controlled by the aggressor.

Conventional or Unconventional?

According to current concepts of modern warfare, war can be broken into the categories of conventional and unconventional warfare. One can also see that military and historical thinkers further consider warfare as an evolutionary process that is defined by technology, the employment of forces and by social pressures.⁸⁵ This dual and ambiguous understanding of warfare as an evolutionary process and as an activity with many forms, sets the stage for a better understanding of hybrid warfare as a sum of many evolving parts.

Without the purpose to open additional lines for debates and in-depth analysis of conventional and unconventional warfare, a short comparison of those two is necessary for further understanding of hybrid warfare. It is a bit simplified but meaningful view that conventional warfare is the use of conventional, in another word traditional, means to wage war. Adversaries face each other on the primarily physical battlefield using weapons against each other. It is kind of “force on force” or “state on state” approach in which the used weapon arsenal usually does not include biological, chemical, or nuclear elements. From Western thinkers’ perspective, conventional warfare is very similar to the idea of the Western way of war. In this concept, conventional warfare is state-centric, the applied forces are regularized and regulated, and intensively use firepower and other military technologies that focus on the adversaries’ armed forces as the enemy’s center of gravity.

⁸⁵ Timothy McCulloh and Richard Johnson, JSOU Report 13-4, *Hybrid Warfare* (MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, FL: The Joint Special Operations University Press, 2013), 6, accessed November 15, 2015, https://jsou.socom.mil/jsou%20publications/jsou%2013-4_mcculloh,johnson_hybrid%20warfare_final.pdf.

Unconventional warfare, on the other hand, targets the military but emphasis is on the civilian population and employment of unconventional weapons and tactics. Of course, all of these approaches to war and warfare are continuously changing and transforming through time as the societies and conventions are evolving. By comparing conventional and unconventional wars generally, the nature of hybrid warfare and the environment where it foremost occurs tend to be unconventional and irregular.

To define unconventional and irregular means and ways, NATO and the U.S. military chose different definitions and descriptions. In this case, just as in many other cases among military and policy thinkers there is no exact match and clarity on an understanding of types of warfare. Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, characterizes irregular warfare as a “violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). The strategic point of irregular warfare is to gain or maintain control or influence over, and the support of, a relevant population.”⁸⁶ The NATO doctrine does not define or characterize unconventional warfare or irregular warfare, and it considers the term irregular activity only as the adversary’s activity.

According to NATO doctrine,⁸⁷ the principal tasks of the NATO SOF are special reconnaissance and surveillance, direct action, and military assistance. Compared to that,

⁸⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 2013), I-6.

⁸⁷ NATO, AJP-3.5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations* (Brussels, Belgium: NATO Standardization Agency, December 2013), 2-1.

Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*,⁸⁸ states, “direct action, special reconnaissance, countering weapons of mass destruction, counterterrorism, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, security force assistance, hostage rescue and recovery, counterinsurgency, foreign humanitarian assistance, military information support operations, and civil affairs operations” are the core tasks for U.S. SOF. NATO countries ratify NATO doctrine but they still hold the leverage to maintain their own national doctrine and have their own way to employ their forces. Most of the European countries’ Special Forces were trained by the U.S. Special Forces, therefore they understand and use the U.S. terms, definitions, and core tasks aligned with their doctrines instead of NATO Allied Joint Publications. For instance, conducting unconventional warfare in addition to the NATO SOF main tasks is one of the principal tasks for some European, NATO countries’ SOF.

Undoubtedly, the theory and implications of hybrid warfare are vague. Numbers of descriptions of hybrid warfare emphasize different characteristics, ends, ways, and means. Today’s policy makers and military decision makers need to work through both the definitional aspect and implications of hybrid warfare. The thesis will attempt to expose the achievability to oppose hybrid warfare threats. The objective is not to identify clear “win” or “lose” responses to the question. The point is to analyze the current efforts and capabilities of NATO and to determine possibilities that the allies could take into consideration to strengthen their efficiency in facing hybrid warfare threats. It is noticeable that nation-states with political, social, and financial problems will find many

⁸⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, July 2014), X.

challenges when preparing to confront an incredibly complex and broad issue. However, these challenges should not prevent these nations or NATO from opposing the threat. NATO and its allies should do their best to find possible approaches, despite any unique internal issues or the complexity of the opposing threats.

Methodology

The vast number of authors and writers on the subject of hybrid warfare demands some form of selection. The impact different writers have had on current discourse determines the range of sources.

Case studies also help to compare the extrapolation of the analysis and synthesis of publications. The thesis will implement qualitative research methods and use the DIME framework for analysis.

The thesis will foremost assess and define the contemporary hybrid security environment and actors. The thesis will analyze the threats and challenges, addressing actors' broad-spectrum capabilities and potential effects they can cause.

The qualitative research within a DIME framework will analyze the strategy and operational variables within EU and NATO and further analyze NATO SOF's ways to address hybrid threats. Analysis of the current security environment and strategies of actors will be done with Lykke's theory. The thesis will employ a strategic estimate to understand the fundamental conditions of hybrid warfare for NATO SOF.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDIES

The War between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006

The war in Lebanon of 2006 involved a state actor, Israel, and a non-state actor, Hezbollah. This war is often referred to as one of recent history's prototypes of hybrid warfare. One reason for this is that what on paper seemed like a situation where Israel had all the advantages of a modern army, in reality turned out to be in favor of Hezbollah. In the conflict, the Shiite militia, Hezbollah, effectively fought against the Israeli Defense Force. The origins of the conflict go back to the formation of the state of Israel in 1948. Due to the stressed relations between the neighbors, Israel has invaded Lebanon quite a few times. In 2000, after Israel pulled its forces from Lebanon, a new borderline was established that derived to the war of 2006. The United Nations Security Council recognized the new borderline with the intent to allow Lebanon to recover its territory. Hezbollah used Israel's withdrawal of the forces to reinforce its positions. The Lebanese Government could not, or would not, send troops to southern Lebanon, and left the region open to Hezbollah's influence. Hezbollah used the open space and lack of governance to create a kind of state within a state.⁸⁹ Hezbollah strengthened its control of southern Lebanon through military power, and it also increased its authority and reputation among the local populations by taking social responsibilities. The sense and understanding of the local communities' need for schools, medical facilities, or the care for the elders, assisted

⁸⁹ Hillel Fradkin, Husain Haqqani, Eric B. Brown, and Hassan Mneimneh, eds., "Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 8 (2009): 68, accessed March 14, 2016, <http://www.hudson.org/research/7163-current-trends-in-islamist-ideology-volume-8>.

Hezbollah in preserving control of the area and over its people. Harmonizing its efforts Hezbollah also filled the roles of security forces, effectively policing and maintaining stability within the region eventually to challenge Israel's presence in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah considered its fighters to have both a military and civilian role, living among the civilians but being part of a military strategy.⁹⁰

During the war between the two parties, Hezbollah demonstrated all the elements of hybrid warfare when it simultaneously used its conventional and irregular forces, implemented guerrilla tactics, psychological warfare, terrorism, and criminal activities. This demonstrated its capability to integrate different groups or cells into one united and large efficient force.

External support from multidimensional organizations and additionally from Iran played a key role in Hezbollah's success. Iran trained, equipped, and financially supported Hezbollah with an estimated 50 to 100 million U.S. dollars annually.⁹¹ Hezbollah combat groups involved guerrilla forces and a regular army. Hezbollah exploited the urban terrain to remain near non-combatants. Additionally, the Shiite militia used a conventional arsenal that included light artillery, anti-tank rocket launchers, and anti-tank guided missiles. The forces were also supported by unmanned aerial vehicles and anti-ship guided missiles. The notable conventional arsenal of Hezbollah forced Israel to mobilize its approximately thirty thousand troops. The aftermath was about 119

⁹⁰ George Emile Irani, "Irregular Warfare and Non-State Combatants: Israel and Hezbollah," *FRIDE Comment* (October 2007): 2, accessed April 11, 2016, <http://www.comw.org/rma/fulltext/0710irani.pdf>.

⁹¹ Marcin Andrzej Piotrowski, "Hezbollah: The Model of a Hybrid Threat," *PISM Bulletin* 24 (March 2015): 1, accessed February 27, 2016, https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=19320.

Israeli soldiers and 42 civilians dead, more than 1,200 wounded, and around 50 Israeli tanks damaged. Although Hezbollah had a limited tactical effect, the consequences for Israel were more extensive. Hezbollah's attacks terrorized the northern part of Israel, "paralyzed the country's economy and forced over a million civilians to temporarily evacuate."⁹²

Besides the physical damage, Hezbollah was able to create a massive psychological effect as well that later urged Israel to build its counter-rocket and missile-defense systems. In addition to the physical battlefield, Hezbollah challenged Israel with a broad propaganda campaign. By using television and radio stations, Hezbollah successfully created an overwhelming perception in the Arab world, and partially in the international community, about its activity and successes. The massive propaganda spread the messages that Hezbollah as a non-state militia force prevailed against the strongest military power in the region. The "weak" prevailed against the "strong." Evidently, Israel did not lose the war on the conventional battlefield: however, it varied its counter-strategy against Hezbollah and combined conventional military measures with counter-terrorist means. Israel's hybrid strategy, which helped to contain the conflict, combined covert activities with the practical use of military force.

One can perceive a standoff, at least temporarily, in the region. Iran and Hezbollah are afraid that any direct Israeli involvement in the Syrian civil war could further weaken the Assad regime which would undermine the Shiite influence in Lebanon. Israel, on the other hand, reached the point where it has no interest in a war against Hezbollah and further destabilization of the region. Therefore, both sides try to

⁹² Piotrowski, 1.

keep the conflict below the threshold of conventional war. The Hezbollah-Israel conflict illustrates well the characteristics of hybrid warfare and emphasizes the need to develop and implement a counter-hybrid strategy.

Hybrid Warfare Waged by Russia

The most recent first-hand case study—and the culminating point of the hybrid war argument—is Russia’s aggressive actions in Ukraine since 2014. In this scenario Russia, the strong, employs an exceptional degree of hybrid ways and means against the weak or more fragile state (Ukraine) to intimidate and force it to submit to Russia’s will.

Russia’s experiences and lessons learned about hybrid war arise from the mid-1990s when Chechen forces were blending conventional capabilities, irregular tactics, information operations, and deliberate terrorism as they waged war against Russia in the territory of Chechnya and deep in Russian territory. Hybrid means like high-visibility terrorist attacks and mass hostage-taking incidents were deliberately implemented by the Chechens. Russia initially had to withdraw its forces from Chechnya, but later led by a former KGB operative, Vladimir Putin, were able to defeat the Chechen rebels by using undercover operations that adopted terrorist tactics.⁹³ In addition to this most recent Russian experience, in 2008, the war in Georgia provided other components that would be found in Crimea in 2014. In Georgia, Russia implemented a combined political-military strategy to isolate Georgia from its Western partners and set the conditions for Russian military success. Based on assessed experiences and lessons learned, Russia

⁹³ Andreas Jacobs and Guillaume Lasconjarias, “NATO’s Hybrid Flanks” (Research Paper No. 112, NATO Defense College, Rome, April 2015), 7, accessed January 3, 2016, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/downloads.php?icode=450>.

adjusted its approach and modernized its forces. Russia has developed its ability to employ non-linear tactics, in preference to, or alongside conventional means of warfare. In Ukraine, Russia used a variety of military and non-military tools to support its desired end-state through force and the combination of all available means.

Traditional hybrid threats focus on the combination of various capabilities at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of warfare. Russia, however, is now employing not only the military instrument of power of the modern state, but also the economic, informational, and diplomatic instruments of power.

Gerasimov Doctrine

The so-called Gerasimov Doctrine is an article that provided the perspectives of senior Russian military leaders on the subject of future war. Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, General Valery Gerasimov, published his and other dominant Russian military leaders' perspectives and views of the recent past, present, and probable future of warfare. Gerasimov's vision, which is a detailed assessment and lessons learned from different military conflicts, is often interpreted as a proposed new Russian way of warfare that blends conventional and unconventional warfare with elements of national power. The Russian approach, that sometimes is also called "non-linear war,"⁹⁴ is almost interchangeably referred to as hybrid warfare. Gerasimov's article was not an attempt to reach an audience larger than the primary readers of the Russian General Staff's *Voyennaya Mysl (Military Thought)* journal. More

⁹⁴ Peter Pomerantsev, "How Putin Is Reinventing Warfare," *Foreign Policy*, May 5, 2014, accessed March 26, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/05/how-putin-is-reinventing-warfare/>, 1.

specifically, Gerasimov's primary anticipated audience was the Russian senior political leadership. Gerasimov's article may have wanted to send a message that the Russian military defense can meet Russia's current and future threats in a resource-constrained environment.⁹⁵ Examining Gerasimov's article provides the sense that his explanation of the operational environment and the nature of war are not a new Russian warfare nor a new military doctrine. The article was published about a year before the Maidan protests in Ukraine that set off the actions leading to the annexation of Crimea and Russian-sponsored revolt in eastern Ukraine. Gerasimov and others from the Russian High Staff could not foresee the events that followed the Maidan protests. However, his article is still often cited in the West as Gerasimov's Doctrine for the way Russian forces conduct its operations. Gerasimov's view did not provide a fundamental doctrinal set up for the Crimean and Ukraine crisis. However, the Russian whole of government approach to destabilize and destroy states without direct, overt, and large-scale military intervention seems very adaptable to Gerasimov's assessment based view. Russia's recent past and current global activities almost confirm and justify that Gerasimov and his staff analyzed and assessed the military conflicts well and started to adapt Russia's instruments of power to achieve Russia's political and strategic goals.

⁹⁵ Mark Galeotti, "The 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and Russian Non-Linear War," *In Moscow's Shadows Blog*, July 6, 2014, accessed March 26, 2016, <https://inmoscowsadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war/>.

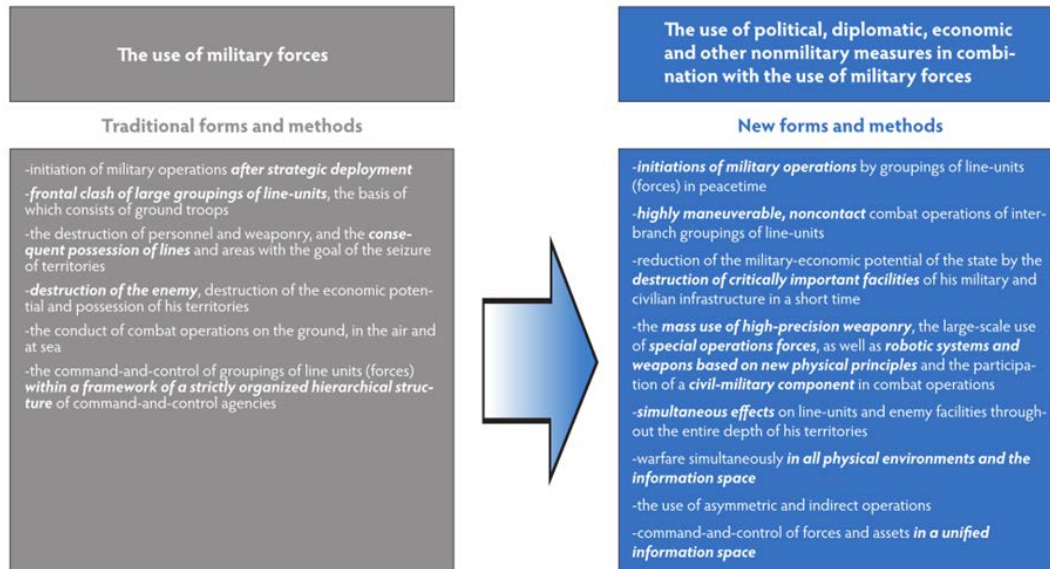


Figure 2. Graphic from Gerasimov Article

Source: Valery Gerasimov, “The Value of Science Is in the Foresight New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying Out Combat Operations,” *Military Review* (January-February 2016): 25, accessed March 26, 2016, <https://www.joomag.com/magazine/military-review-english-edition-january-february-2016/0967230001451491844?page=6>. Note: From article in *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier*, trans. by Charles Bartles, February 26, 2013.

General Gerasimov describes the changes in the character of armed conflicts as the New Generation Warfare that uses advanced technologies and employs multiple actors with the combination of conventional and unconventional methods. From the Russian standpoint, New Generation Warfare uses the political, diplomatic, and economic means combined with other methods of warfare such as cyber, information, and psychological rather than concentrating on an open armed conflict. Gerasimov emphasizes the significance of the undercover employment of the paramilitary, insurgent, and SOF in this warfare. He sees that, “the role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power

of force of weapons in their effectiveness.”⁹⁶ In Gerasimov’s view, the characters of warfare are changed, and achievement of political goals uses new forms and methods.

He recognizes that all conflicts are essentially means to political ends and in modern realities Russia must turn to non-military instruments of power gradually.⁹⁷ However, it does not mean a negative downstream on its military power. Even in this modern hybrid war the military, and especially SOF, has a key role. Any military force in hybrid warfare needs to be tooled appropriately, and their activities need to adjust in concert with the proposed political end state. In the modern war, asymmetrical actions, like “the use of special-operations forces and internal opposition to create a permanently operating front through the entire territory of the enemy state, as well as informational actions”⁹⁸ are commonly used. These actions are not a steady occurrence but rather ongoing changes that are reflected in the doctrinal views of the world’s leading states. Therefore, in Gerasimov’s view, Russia needs to adapt to and use these actions in military conflicts. Gerasimov pulls out examples of past conflicts and concludes them with precise description and recommendation to perfect such activities. For instance, he views the information activities and space which open “wide asymmetrical possibilities for reducing the fighting potential of the enemy.”⁹⁹ Gerasimov understands that “it is necessary to perfect activities in the information space, including the defense of our own

⁹⁶ Gerasimov, 24.

⁹⁷ Galeotti.

⁹⁸ Gerasimov, 27.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

objects.”¹⁰⁰ Gerasimov’s position is that “no matter what forces the enemy has, no matter how well-developed his forces and means of armed conflict may be, forms and methods for overcoming them can be found. He will always have vulnerabilities, and that means that adequate means of opposing him exist.”¹⁰¹

Implementation of the Gerasimov Doctrine

Janis Berzins further analyzed Gerasimov’s vision. Berzins pointed out that Russian planners centered the idea of influence in operational planning and have chosen “skillful internal communications, deception operations, psychological operations and well-constructed external communications”¹⁰² to maximize the achievement of goals. Critically, Russia has demonstrated an innate understanding of the three key target audiences and their probable behavior: the Russian-speaking majority in Crimea; the Ukrainian Government; and the international community, specifically NATO and the EU.¹⁰³ The assessed and analyzed information made Russia able to demonstrate that “the ancient Soviet art of reflexive control is alive and well.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Gerasimov, 27.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Berzins, *Russia’s New Generation Warfare in Ukraine*, 4.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 7.

Based on the work of Chekinov and Bogdanov¹⁰⁵ on New Generation Warfare, Berzins schematized Russia's hybrid warfare, what they call new-generation war, into eight phases:

First Phase: non-military asymmetric warfare (encompassing information, moral, psychological, ideological, diplomatic, and economic measures as part of a plan to establish a favorable political, economic, and military setup).

Second Phase: special operations to mislead political and military leaders by coordinated measures carried out by diplomatic channels, media, and top government and military agencies by leaking false data, orders, directives, and instructions.

Third Phase: intimidation, deceiving, and bribing government and military officers, with the objective of making them abandon their service duties.

Fourth Phase: destabilizing propaganda to increase discontent among the population, boosted by the arrival of Russian bands of militants, escalating subversion.

Fifth Phase: establishment of no-fly zones over the country to be attacked, imposition of blockades, and extensive use of private military companies in close cooperation with armed opposition units.

Sixth Phase: commencement of military action, immediately preceded by large-scale reconnaissance and subversive missions. All types, forms, methods, and forces, including special operations forces, space, radio, radio engineering, electronic, diplomatic, and secret service intelligence, and industrial espionage.

Seventh Phase: combination of targeted information operation, electronic warfare operation, aerospace operation, continuous airforce harassment, combined with the use of high precision weapons launched from various platforms (long-range artillery, and weapons based on new physical principles, including microwaves, radiation, non-lethal biological weapons).

Eighth Phase: roll over the remaining points of resistance and destroy surviving enemy units by special operations conducted by reconnaissance units to spot which enemy units have survived and transmit their coordinates to the attacker's missile and artillery units; fire barrages to annihilate the defender's

¹⁰⁵ Sergei G. Chekinov and Sergei A. Bogdanov, "The Nature and Content of a New-Generation War," *Military Thought* no. 4 (October-December 2013): 15-22, accessed April 11, 2016, http://www.eastviewpress.com/Files/MT_FROM%20THE%20CURRENT%20ISSUE_No.4_2013.pdf.

resisting army units by effective advanced weapons; air-drop operations to surround points of resistance; and territory mopping-up operations by ground troops.¹⁰⁶

This structure of Russia's hybrid warfare indicates Russia's below the threshold strategy. It means that Russia would probably follow and would not go beyond the first five phases in a future utilization of its warfare. It probably would avoid any frontal direct military attack to achieve its goals successfully, just as it did in the case of Crimea and Ukraine. In a scenario where the targeted country would be a member of NATO, the utilization of the phases up to the fifth would still not invoke NATO's Article 5.

The phases are flexible regarding the composition of forces, or the sequence of phases. Some phases could go simultaneously or unilaterally, but either way, the primary goal of Russia is not to employ the sixth phase or above. Stepping over the threshold of open armed conflict, which would be a trigger to invoke NATO Article 5, is not the intent of Russia.

Russia learned a lot from previous operations in which some tactics, techniques, and procedures had been already used and tested against other countries. Economic pressure and sanctions, political destabilization, information warfare, and cyber-attack are all fit to Russia's hybrid warfare. Russia's most recent actions in Crimea and Ukraine "broadly consists of three categories: the organization of ethnic Russian or pro-Russia social and political groups and movements; the deployment or support of informal or unofficial security forces in key areas; and finally the launching of formal military

¹⁰⁶ Chekinov and Bogdanov, 6.

operations.”¹⁰⁷ Russia’s shaping actions concentrated on exploiting economic influence, using information and cyber warfare, strengthening and supporting separatist, anti-government movements, and government officials; fueling religious and ethnic tension among the population, establishing contacts and mobilizing organized crime groups. It does all these to set conditions and put pressure on the targeted country.

In 2014 in Crimea, Russia employed unmarked Special Forces also called “little green men”¹⁰⁸ or “polite people.”¹⁰⁹ The unmarked soldiers, who were equipped with Russian- type weapons, blocked the military and police facilities and occupied key government buildings to prevent any counteractions. Simultaneously, organized demonstrations arose all over the country. It is noticeable that some of the protesters were armed and demonstrated high military skills. Later on, the protesters started taking over public administration and media buildings which were critical to taking the federal government. During the whole operation both the protesters and “polite people” appealed to unsatisfied locals against the central government in Kiev. Russia officially consequently denied that Russian troops would take part in any of the events.

During the operation, the non-military means and the Russian Special Forces’ unconventional activities dominated, but the conventional military power also had a vital

¹⁰⁷ Stratfor, “Putting Russia’s Crimean Intervention in Context, Stratfor Global Intelligence” April 12, 2014, accessed March 18, 2016, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/putting-russias-crimean-intervention-context>.

¹⁰⁸ “Little green men” refers to the color of the uniform of the unmarked soldiers and their unconfirmed origin during the operation in Crimea.

¹⁰⁹ Roger McDermott, “Myth and Reality—A Net Assessment of Russia’s ‘Hybrid Warfare’ Strategy Since the Start of 2014 (Part Two),” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11, no. 185 (October 2014), accessed October 31, 2015, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42972&no_cache=1#.Vzvw84-cHmI.

role by backing Russia's strategy. Russia's goal was to reach its desired end state without an open armed conflict. However, Russia was prepared to step further if necessary. The massive information campaign and propaganda enforced the fear and confusion, and reduced the morale and motivation of the local security forces and civilian population to resist.

Russia's success depended on three key elements. First, the use of "soft power." The political, diplomatic, economic resources, and the information campaign shaped the environment for the deployment of the Special Forces. Second, Russia employed Special Forces who further escalated the situation and controlled the occupation, blockade of the vital security forces, governmental, local administration, and media buildings occupation. Third, the presence of prepositioned conventional forces on the border prevented Ukraine and the West from developing any immediate effective countermeasures.

Russia's successful annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its continuous operation in eastern Ukraine demonstrated that an ultimate goal of a country is reachable without an open armed attack. In a Russian hybrid scenario, where military capabilities are not sufficient enough, the "system" is ready to bridge those gaps with all non-military means available. These means would be adjusted and hand tailored directly against the vulnerabilities of the target. Russia is lonely, but not weak, without real allies and sufficient conventional military capabilities to achieve its expanded objectives. According to Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, Russia plans to completely renew

its nuclear arsenal by 2020.¹¹⁰ This means that Russia might imaginably be ready to use its tactical nuclear resources. It is unclear how ambitious Russia is and what price it is willing to pay for regaining influence and control over post-Soviet spaces.

Conclusion of the Case Studies

Gerasimov's view of the operational environment is similar to the West's. For instance, he foresees less large-scale warfare, emphasizes the importance of interagency cooperation and sees operations conducted mainly in urban terrain. Furthermore, Gerasimov envisions a blending of offense and defense, and sees differences of military activities at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels melting.¹¹¹ Gerasimov views the current Russian and the adversaries' military capabilities realistically. He understands that Russia needs to ensure that the conflicts and wars are fought in ways that are best for Russia's needs. Thus, NATO with both its political and military capabilities needs to mitigate and cover existing vulnerabilities and be required to identify and develop adequate NATO means to counter such a hybrid threat.

Although Gerasimov views the operational environment in much the same way as the West, he holds a different opinion of the ways to approach problems. Russia is testing some unconventional means to counter hostile indirect and asymmetric methods, however, it does not lose sight on conventional military forces and sees them as being of

¹¹⁰ RT, "Russia to Fully Renew Nuclear Forces by 2020," September 22, 2014, accessed January 23, 2016, <https://www.rt.com/politics/189604-russia-nuclear-2020-mistral/>.

¹¹¹ Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review* (January-February 2016): 36, accessed March 26, 2016, <https://www.joomag.com/magazine/military-review-english-edition-january-february-2016/0967230001451491844?page=6>.

the utmost importance. Russia systematically and deliberately develops and invests in its military means and adjusts, synchronizing both conventional and unconventional forces to Russia's other instruments of power. It seems that Russia chose hybrid means and ways to achieve its ends and is ready to use them aggressively.

The very aim of hybrid warfare is to keep war below the threshold of a reaction from traditional defense institutions and organizations such as NATO. Thus, NATO has difficulty in reacting to hybrid warfare with the traditional instruments of collective defense. They are not designed for dealing with stealthy and indefinite threats.

Similar to and possibly alongside small countries' national defense strategy, NATO needs a new concept of defense against hybrid threats that can react flexibly to hybrid challenges. NATO must prepare for further challenges across the range of military operations in the anti-hybrid campaign. NATO needs to have the basics of combined arms fire and maneuver for successful operations against state and non-state actors that carry out hybrid warfare. NATO member militaries focused on preparing soldiers and units for duty in certain countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, or Syria might be expert at counter-insurgency, but less prepared for sophisticated hybrid opponents.

Opponents that have more fidelity to access sophisticated weapons could completely worsen the already complex challenges. Thus, to own precision standoff fires it is also necessary to counter a hybrid adversary, but not sufficient enough to deal with them when they are operating deeply among the population.

Heavy forces need to be complemented with light and medium forces, such as SOF, particularly in urban or other complex environments. The use of only light forces would not provide or increase survivability, lethality, or mobility of operations. However,

their flexibility, modularity, and capability to sufficiently operate in the human domain make them equal to, if not superior to, heavy forces in hybrid warfare. The capability to incorporate cultural intelligence and language skills is a relevant and important element of a hybrid conflict. Persistent contact with local populations establishes, maintains security and provides actionable intelligence.

Tireless pressure against an indescribable adversary can only be achieved with highly trained forces. The lessons learned from the case studies point out that hybrid warfare could severely challenge the military thinking and preferred operational framework of countries and global power organizations like NATO. Continuous, deliberate analysis of joint force structure, their capabilities, and effectiveness against hybrid opponents is further required. Sufficient integration of organizations, technologies, and procedures in a counter hybrid operation requires mutually agreed ends and collectively employed means and ways. To prevail against hybrid opponents also requires clearly identified skills, level of training and readiness.

CHAPTER 5

NATO'S RESPONSE TO HYBRID THREATS

NATO is a political and military alliance of 28 countries that share democratic values and have joined to pursue collective security and defense. NATO was founded in 1949 and played a unique role in maintaining stability and safety in the trans-Atlantic area during the Cold War. After the Cold War, the Alliance has transformed itself to meet the security challenges of the new century. Recognizing that new security concerns often arise beyond Europe, NATO has become the hub of a global security network, establishing partnerships with countries by providing opportunities for practical military cooperation and political dialogue.

New strategic threats to NATO's eastern flank posed by Russia are forcing the Alliance to adopt new strategic postures in response. Russia uses numerous tactics to alter the status quo of the European security order established after World War I. Russia pushes forward its agenda of weakening NATO influence in Europe and fragmenting Europe's ability for collective action in the security, political, and economic arenas. Hybrid warfare exploits domestic weaknesses through non-military means such as political, informational, and economic pressure and manipulation, but is still backed by the threat of conventional and unconventional military means.

NATO Defense Strategy

Currently, most of NATO's Eastern European members' national defense strategy relies on a perceived guarantee of NATO, believing that NATO will defend their sovereignty in case of an armed attack. NATO's Article 5 states that the collective

defense will occur when one or more of the NATO members are under armed attack. However, the characteristics of hybrid warfare minimize the chance of any intervention from the Alliance. Hence, small countries must start to develop their capabilities and countermeasures alongside more self-sufficient national defense strategies to be capable of defending their sovereignty with a limited or “delayed” help from NATO.

Today’s hybrid threat, especially posed by Russia, makes worse an already complex problem for NATO. Waging hybrid warfare to defeat hybrid threats is not a new phenomenon. Post-Ukraine, Russia is unlikely to repeat the same approach or pattern when hybrid warfare is used next. Thus, it is not enough to copycat and adapt to Russia’s recent acts. Hybrid warfare as a whole is not in doctrine, and its tactics are in a state of experimentation and evolution. Hybrid threats will continue to evolve as more lethal and precise weaponry becomes readily available to information age guerillas, funded with capital from global criminal activities.

Deterring and defeating hybrid threats poses a significant and intimidating challenge for NATO. Engaging in hybrid warfare requires some pre-requisites. One of the essential pre-requisites of an effective engagement in facing hybrid warfare threats is a tight political-military relationship. A continuous, honest political-military relationship among NATO members and between NATO and the EU is necessary to counter successfully hybrid threats.

NATO is embracing its RAP as a means of responding rapidly to threats. Hybrid warfare, often falling outside of the classically defined military arena, is emerging as an important question about the degree to which NATO, primarily as a military organization, can respond to such challenges. Hybrid warfare requires the response of

NATO that includes the national powers of all 28 member states. That power, when combined, makes NATO the most formidable security, political, and economic force in the world.

NATO Response to Hybrid Threats

At the heads of state and government meeting of the NATO Council in Wales in 2014, the allies condemned Russia's escalation and its illegal military intervention in Ukraine. The declaration described and defined hybrid warfare as a situation "where a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures are employed in a highly integrated design."¹¹² The council stated that the members of NATO "will ensure that NATO is able to address effectively the specific challenges posed by hybrid warfare threats."¹¹³

It is necessary that such threats be defined, properly understood, and the early indicators established. In today's international security environment, there is no universally accepted and uniform definition of hybrid warfare. However, there is also no consistency in the way that hybrid warfare can be used. NATO is defining it as the use of asymmetrical tactics to exploit domestic weaknesses through non-military means, supported by the threat of conventional military means, where the tactics can be scaled and tailored to fit the particular situation.¹¹⁴ NATO efficiency in hybrid warfare is up to

¹¹² NATO, "Wales Summit Declaration."

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Calha, 3.

successful adoption and adjustment of strategy, capability, and resiliency by member states and the organization as a whole.

Adversaries of NATO will use hybrid threats to exploit vulnerabilities of the Alliance whenever and wherever possible. These threats and acts may not be bound by Western legal or ethical frameworks. Countering a hybrid threat requires more weight on actions that create effects in the cognitive domain. Actors of hybrid war may also choose to employ a long-term strategy, which emphasizes avoiding defeat and not primarily seeking victory.

Separated usage of the military instrument of powers may not be sufficient in countering hybrid threats. As an alternative, a broader comprehensive approach, supported by massive information operations, will be required. Some of NATO's adversaries will pursue ways to deny NATO's military advantage by undermining its cohesion, will, credibility, and influence. Such an asymmetric threat will negate both NATO's military forces and the members' civilian societies to encounter it on an equal footing or by comparable methods. NATO needs to pursue influencing such a complex condition through the application of DIME instruments of power, and related civil capabilities. Independently, each of these capabilities is limited to influence and impact effectively the complex conditions. Therefore, the Alliance needs to choose a comprehensive approach that carefully uses all instruments of power in concert.

The crisis in Ukraine genuinely changed the perception of the security environment in Europe. The NATO Summit in Wales in 2014 recognized the need to not just simply adapt to but encompass every dimension of the crisis. One clearly visible “outcome was the Readiness Action Plan, a political measure providing a renewed

Reassurance Policy in the form of help and assistance to any member state that came under attack.”¹¹⁵ This measure “provides a coherent and comprehensive package of necessary measures to respond to the changes in the security environment on NATO’s borders and further afield that are of concern to allies.”¹¹⁶ According to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the Alliance’s greatest strength is the ability to adapt.¹¹⁷ This adaptation of NATO’s strategy focuses on three keywords: comprehensive, responsive, and rapid.

Comprehensive

The comprehensive approach seems to be a global concept that is often associated with civil-military cooperation. It is often mentioned in conjunction with counterinsurgency, provincial reconstruction teams, peace operations, stability operations and crisis management. One of the fundamentals of NATO’s comprehensive approach is increasing interaction with other actors in the global security environment. Effective crisis management requires a holistic approach that involves political, civilian and military instruments of power. Allied leaders agreed at Lisbon in 2010 to enhance NATO’s contribution to a comprehensive approach to crisis management to improve NATO’s ability to contribute to stabilization and reconstruction.

¹¹⁵ Guillaume Lasconjarias and Jeffrey Arthur Larsen, eds., *NATO’s Response to Hybrid Threats*, Forum Paper 24 (Rome: NATO Defense College, Research Division, 2015), accessed February 28, 2016, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/downloads.php?icode=471>, 271.

¹¹⁶ NATO, “Wales Summit Declaration.”

¹¹⁷ NATO, “NATO Secretary General: One of our greatest strengths is our ability to adapt,” March 25, 2015, accessed February 28, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_118430.htm.

Responsive and Rapid

In 2002, NATO introduced the NATO Response Force (NRF) designed to carry out almost any mission. After years of debate on the size and actual responsiveness of the NRF, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg recently spoke about doubling the current size of NRF and creating in its center a 48-hour spearhead readiness element, the VJTF. The VJTF is a brigade-size land component with enablers (air, maritime and Special Forces) capable of being deployed anywhere to both support allies and deter potential adversaries. In April 2015, the alert procedures for the VJTF were tested with over 1,500 personnel from 11 allied nations taking part, while high-readiness units were physically deployed. This series of complicated maneuvers, demonstrated the enduring commitment to collective security, enhanced multinational training and security cooperation across several countries, and improved responsiveness. These and other similar activities show that comprehensive and rapid NATO action requires an increase of deployable forces, modern equipment, and the availability of ships, aircraft, and troops. Pre-deployment and pre-positioning of NATO forces to where common threats could be identified, such as the Baltic states, would be an effective preventative measure in places. In the case of Russia, this approach could work, however, such an approach is still assessed to be insufficient to address the hybrid threats.

NATO has started to adapt to the hybrid challenges—particularly in reaction to Russia’s hybrid war in Ukraine—by rapidly developing a comprehensive strategy against hybrid threats. However, NATO is still far from implementing such a strategy. To develop an effective, comprehensive plan, NATO needs to balance its forces, as well as further develop its instruments, resources, and approaches. NATO forces need to be

highly flexible and adaptive, and NATO NRF and VJTF need to encompass every dimension of a counter-hybrid force.

Strategy–Ends, Ways, Means

Any effective strategy requires an understanding of, and balance among, ends, ways, and means that has to be aligned with a proper control of risk regarding each element and the overall result. Arthur F. Lykke both theoretically and practically researched military strategy. In his work, “Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy”¹¹⁸ he emphasized that the general concept of strategy “can be used as a basis for the formulation of any type strategy—military, political, economic, etc., depending upon the element of national power employed.”¹¹⁹ The concept can be expressed as an equation: “Strategy = Ends + Ways + Means.” The “ends” represent the objectives, goals, the knowledge where one is heading. The “ways” are the concepts, policies, the answers for how one is planning to reach the end. The “means” are all of those capabilities and resources are that available and required to attain the desired ends. The whole process of the strategy includes a continuous evaluation of the risks involved. Any strategy can include all these elements, but a proper combination of these elements is required for an efficient strategy.

NATO has made it evident that it believes there is a pattern developing in which Russia violates the sovereignty of its neighbors. NATO neither was the trigger nor the

¹¹⁸ Arthur F. Lykke Jr, “Toward An Understanding of Military Strategy,” in *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*, ed. Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2001), 179-186, accessed April 23, 2016, <http://purl.access.gpo.gov/gpo/lps11754>.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 179.

target of the crisis in Ukraine but it rapidly became an important moment for the Alliance. It was evident from the very beginning of the Ukraine crisis in early 2014 that there was no suitable military option for NATO regarding Ukraine and Crimea. To react efficiently and at the same time prevent returning to Cold War thinking, an appropriate action-reaction challenged the Alliance.

Russia's actions were deliberately and sophisticatedly positioned to be just right under the radar. The Russian hybrid model frankly outmaneuvered NATO's reaction designs. Although the conflict could clearly extend far beyond Ukraine and go politically beyond Ukraine, NATO and its 28 nations become observers of the war in Ukraine. The Russian below the radar aggression resulted in careful reactions in NATO. Members of the Alliance demonstrated an expressed solidarity at the NATO Wales Summit where they agreed on some important deliverables to Ukraine. At the same time, countries tried to keep dialogue channels open to ensure time for politics and diplomacy so that Russia could realize that its current policies will not be successful in the long run.

The NATO Wales Summit, an attempt to address the new challenges, reaffirmed the members of NATO's strong commitment to collective defense and approved the NATO RAP with the intent to strengthen NATO's collective defense. It is clear that Russia's hybrid warfare cannot be answered by a military alliance alone. NATO has to make sure to have the right forces available to overcome its political disagreements and enhance its comprehensive approach with other international organizations, such as the EU, to address hybrid threats effectively.

EU–NATO Cooperation

The EU and NATO share many common strategic interests. In a spirit of complementarity, both organizations consult and work together to prevent and resolve crises and armed conflicts. The idea, then the permanent decision, of closer cooperation on security issues goes back to 2001. The EU presidency and the NATO secretary general exchanged letters defining the scope of cooperation between the organizations. Further, this collaboration has speeded up when the NATO-EU Declaration on European Security and Defense Policy was signed. The declaration paved the way for the adoption of “Berlin Plus” arrangements in 2003, which derived the basis for everyday work in crisis management between EU and NATO. The provisions provide EU access to NATO’s collective assets and capabilities for EU-led operations in crisis management. They enable the Alliance to support EU-led operations in which NATO as a whole is not engaged.¹²⁰ In addition, NATO and EU have a close cooperation to combat terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. An ongoing active and concerted planning of capabilities development also shows ties between the organizations. NATO and EU officials frequently meet at different levels to assure the deliberate and committed sense between the organizations.

Another linkage between the organizations is that both are in evolution to adapt their ways to face progressing challenges and in search of effectiveness, to better use their tools. Both organizations are developing better processes and calling for a stronger European attitude on security and defense issues. The EU and NATO are dealing with

¹²⁰ NATO, “NATO’s Relations with the European Union,” April 9, 2009, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.nato.int/summit2009/topics_en/21-nato-eu_strategic_partnership.html.

risks and threats complementarily but using their available tools differently. The complex nature and vast scale of risks and threats demand a strengthened relationship with the organizations and with their partners. Complementary use of the means and ways to address challenges in a comprehensive approach is one of the best options to use existing means and capabilities efficiently.

NATO Challenges

A formulation of a meaningful and efficient strategy preparation and decision on clear and achievable ends requires an honest view on critical challenges facing NATO. The most fundamental issues relate to operational readiness, hybrid warfare, instability in neighboring countries, and resilience. One of these acute challenges is Russia and its disruptive activity at NATO's eastern flank. Aligned with its inherent source of instability Russia also serves as the primary strategic adversary of NATO. Russia is frequently placing NATO at the top of its security concerns and continuously views NATO through hostile lenses. In addition to its sophisticated strategic rhetoric, it also challenges NATO and Europe through its actions. Its engagements in Ukraine might be seen as a standalone act, but the effects extend beyond Ukraine's borders. Russia's provocative activities like financial manipulation, illegal border crossings, sudden military exercises, and force deployments near borders, and threats of using nuclear weapons all actively threaten NATO and its allies.

NATO, along with Europe, is challenged by the lack of resilience of member states' societies against hybrid warfare. State and non-state actors who carry out hybrid warfare are less intent on conventional goals like seizing and holding territories. However, they focus more on destroying and disrupting the societies and their

capabilities to function well. So far, NATO is experiencing continuous and multiple threats, primarily against the cyber domain, that are increasing in number and effect. However, it does not mean that the requirements for resilience are limited to cyber threats only. NATO and its European allies need to extend their senses and develop resilience in NATO and Europe in both cyber and human domains.

The new Euro-Atlantic security problem underlined an additional, seemingly less strategic challenge that NATO and most importantly its member states' governments need to consider. It is the consistently low or in some cases declining military expenditures of member nations. NATO's guideline is for the allies to spend a minimum of 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense. Flat or declining military budgets primarily negatively influence capability development and synchronization of NATO members' militaries. However, more prominently they hurt NATO forces' operational readiness. NATO articulated the intent to reverse or halt any decline in defense spending to ensure that allies' armed forces can operate together effectively, including through the implementation of agreed NATO standards and doctrines. At the edge of NATO's flank, or even outside of it, militarily weak countries can be easy targets for hybrid threats. The umbrella of collective defense can be useful only if there are healthy and militarily committed NATO members under the thick line of protection.

Each of the above NATO challenges has a military relation, and that calls into play NATO's core capability of military use as a component of an overall strategy. NATO's most fundamental issues at its eastern flank relate to hybrid warfare, resilience, and operational readiness. The new proposed strategy of stability generation intends to ensure that NATO has the capabilities to meet its challenges.

NATO Strategy Concept to Counter Hybrid Warfare

Parallel with the above-mentioned immediate NATO reactions to hybrid threats, like the NATO RAP and VJTF, NATO has started to implement a new strategy called “stability generation.”¹²¹ The concept is a NATO attempt to ensure security and reduce the threat of significant conflicts at NATO’s east and south flanks. The strategy of stability generation further develops NATO efforts that it is already undertaking and coordinates and encompasses strategic ends, ways, and means.

Hybrid warfare has changed the scene of modern conflicts. When warfare changes, national and multinational defense also must change. Thus, NATO as a multinational institution which nests domestic and transnational, political and military cases, is also forced to change and adjust its strategy. Modern methods need to be incorporated into traditional NATO activities to extend the existing functions, and to empower accomplishment against attacks if needed.

Resilience in Counter-Hybrid Warfare

NATO’s Strategic Concepts include three essential core tasks: collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security.¹²² The strategy of stability generation extends the three traditional pillars with the element of resilience and builds up NATO’s Strategic Concepts on these four pillars. Resilience should be a key factor in nations’ defense strategy. In today’s globally interconnected world, nations and societies need to

¹²¹ Franklin D. Kramer, *NATO’s New Strategy: Stability Generation* (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015), 1, accessed April 5, 2016, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/natos_new_strategy_web.pdf.

¹²² NATO, “Strategic Concepts,” last modified November 11, 2014, accessed April 5, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm.

be ready to anticipate, accept, and react appropriately against instability arising from conflicts and extremism in neighboring countries or across the Alliance. An enhanced sufficient resilient capacity would prevent and deter threats to critical functions of societies, and it would limit damages to the cohesion of the Alliance and its nations' populations. An effective strategy is more than military might and forces. Therefore, NATO strategy would need to be a part of a broader NATO-EU strategy. However, the accomplishment of the strategy of stability generation requires sufficient military capabilities appropriately balanced for conventional and hybrid conflicts.

The NATO Declaration made no clarity about hybrid threats and their position in the spectrum of conflicts. However, it is the idea of the author that, based on the assessment of the current security environment, hybrid warfare is a form of unconventional warfare and likely NATO will consider it similarly in near future.

Structurally, the respective counter-hybrid or stability generation NATO forces should be organized around NATO SOF, assuming that these forces would better understand and better mirror the adversary's deployment. A networked structure of respective elements might be needed that could be backed by comprehensive approach.

Cyber-defense teams could protect and secure NATO's communication networks and deter cyber-attacks. PSYOPs units could counter the opponent's propaganda. Civil-military capabilities could provide support to the local population. All of these elements should be backed by accurate intelligence and situational awareness. Finally, NATO should become better prepared to counter (untrue) narratives and challenge propaganda and disinformation.¹²³

Such an approach requires complex exercises and a better integration of NATO's partnership infrastructure into its different strategic planning and crisis management

¹²³ Lasconjarias and Larsen, 274.

efforts. The security situation in the east and the west flank of NATO is very different in nature. Therefore, NATO might need to apply a holistic view to safety and use separated NATO strategies at certain points.

Spectrum of Conflicts in Unconventional Warfare–Hybrid

Among other concepts, hybrid warfare is useful in understanding the role of unconventional forces and in making possible the importance of gray zone conflicts and their strategies. Application of hybrid theory can be seen in Russian campaigns, from the Georgian conflict in 2008, through the Crimean annexation in 2014, to the recent Ukraine conflict. In these interrelated conflicts, Russia pursued indirect and hybrid ways and means. They were not and did not introduce a new type of warfare. However, President Putin, relying on a new generation of leadership within the Russian military and in his “home base” KGB, has applied long-standing Russian concepts of expanded conflict that are hardly read and understood by the Western perspective of NATO. The conflicts clearly demonstrate the Russian military’s understanding of modern warfare’s environment in which peace and war are becoming blurred. Russian hybrid conflict scenarios extensively use political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other non-military ways and means. The usage and implementation of the so-called Gerasimov Doctrine are seen and understood as hybrid threats by Western military theorists and major European and NATO policymakers. The West and the author of this paper recently link hybrid threats with the below the threshold approach. Hoffman finds that “such an extension of hybrid threat theory is understandable given the theory’s sourcing from Russian and Chinese writings, which deal with the fusion of various non-military tools

(finance, propaganda, lawfare, etc.) with threats of force.”¹²⁴ He finds that “the below the threshold idea fits better with gray zone or ambiguous conflicts.”¹²⁵ Such a distinction between hybrid and gray zone conflicts might support NATO and its European allies. In explanation of a respectful theorist of unconventional warfare, one can distinguish between gray zone and hybrid conflicts well. “Hybrid threats ably combine various modes of fighting in time and space, with attendant violence in the middle of the conflict spectrum. Gray zone conflicts do not cross that threshold and use a different mix of methods, entirely short of bloodshed.”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Hoffman, “The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict,” 29.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

NATO SOF

NATO SOF must prepare to operate within a noncontiguous battlespace marked by the integration of political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information operations. In the twenty-first century, the comprehensive battlespace dictates necessary changes if NATO SOF wants to be successful on the field of battle. SOF's significant advantage over most conventional forces in the comprehensive environment is familiarity with combined and joint operations and irregular warfare. NATO members expect NATO SOF at all levels to be poised and ready to act or react anywhere in the world.

In terms of capabilities and readiness, Special Operations Task Groups and Special Operations Task Units are the primary tactical action units of NATO SOF. They provide the main part of face-to-face activities with the local nationals and organizations that will ultimately help NATO and its allies win or lose the next war or conflict.

The NATO Allied Joint Publication, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*,¹²⁷ says that one of the characteristics of special operations is: "Special operations can be conducted directly against an adversary by forces acting in a single engagement, such as a raid against a critical node, or indirectly, for example, by organizing, training, and supporting an indigenous force through military assistance (MA)."¹²⁸ It positions special operations as it "may be conducted across the spectrum of conflict (or range of military operations) as part of Article 5 collective defence or non-

¹²⁷ NATO, AJP-3.5.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 1-1.

Article 5 crisis response operations (NA5CROs) to fulfill NATO's three essential core tasks (collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security)."¹²⁹ Special operations are conducted not only as part of the NATO Crisis Response System but also for peacetime engagement, enhancing cooperation.¹³⁰

NATO SOF holds a wide range variety of capabilities that can be employed prior to or in crisis situations. Prior to a crisis situation, SOF is the key capability to provide situational awareness that directly supports timely decision-making at both organization and national levels. Resilience building is an important and viable capability tool of SOF that adds a crucial portion to NATO's counter hybrid quests. In the early part of the crisis, SOF can delay or end the spread of crisis by shaping operations.

¹²⁹ NATO, AJP-3.5, 1-2.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

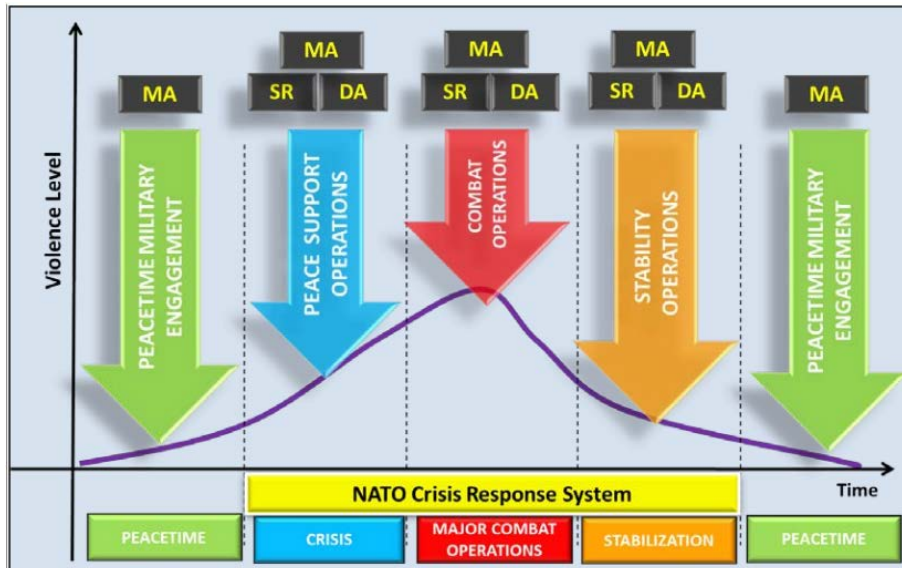


Figure 3. Special Operations and the Spectrum of Conflict (Generic Example)

Source: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, AJP-3.5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations* (Brussels, Belgium: NATO Standardization Agency, December 2013), 1-3, accessed April 23, 2016, <http://nso.nato.int/nso/zpublic/ap/ajp-3.5%20eda%20v1%20e.pdf>.

It is a general truth that the full potential of SOF can be put into effect through the complementary employment of their direct and indirect approaches across the full spectrum of conflicts. NATO SOF needs to navigate in the age of uncertainty and ambiguity where threats and the given responses take place in a part of the range of conflicts that some call the gray zone. Such navigation, however, is not simple. From the NATO SOF definition of the spectrum of conflict (figure 3), one might perceive a security environment where the boundaries between conflicts and peace (war and peace) are clear and distinct. However, hybrid warfare, especially in the way General Gerasimov describes and Russia implements it, continuously changes the character of armed conflicts. In light of this understanding of the spectrum of conflicts, it becomes clear that

NATO's approach might not meet the challenges posed by this altered form of threats. NATO SOF self-described "green" peacetime seems to be much more "gray" as boundaries and limits are blending and blurring.

SOF primarily needs to master the gray area by using its advantage in irregular warfare. The human domain is critical in hybrid war and its counter initiatives as well. Thus, SOF must leverage its advantages over most conventional forces and a conventional approach. Counter hybrid warfare tasks rely on SOF skill to build trust and confidence with partners who are host nation forces and irregular resistance elements. The NATO SOF doctrinal umbrella primarily supports military assistance as the core task of hybrid warfare. This is also the approach of NATO nations in the development of their respective SOF. However, in the case of unconventional warfare related mass generation through the support of resistance, this holds a bigger challenge where nations have to rely on their national defense doctrine. A successful NATO anti-hybrid campaign requires an intensive interagency cooperation internally and between NATO members.

In hybrid warfare, the fight for the local population reaches and exists at all levels where the boundaries among strategic, operational, and even tactical actions are blurred. Nations need to understand that counter hybrid approaches and force development has to focus on the human domain. SOF, and in a broader scope NATO SOF have to concentrate on this domain through internal and external, interagency and multinational cooperation and acts. The focus of military intelligence needs to be shifted from traditional military targets to the human dimension. It has to be aligned with a more flexible information flow and sharing. There is no doubt that hybrid warfare demands NATO nations to review and assess their existing defense policies and military

capabilities. Special operations combined with conventional warfare as a form of irregular warfare, offers not just a requirement to counter hybrid warfare but an option that opens more possibilities for strategy makers.¹³¹

Russia waged hybrid warfare in some areas, and some phases are similar to the concept of unconventional warfare. NATO does not desire to wage unconventional warfare therefore the allied doctrine does not support such NATO SOF activities. However, NATO member nations SOF do not rely on NATO doctrine but have and maintain their own doctrine as well. Several NATO SOF maintains a close relationship with the U.S. SOF. Built on that relationship and the fact that many NATO SOF have been trained and built on U.S. SOF principles, one assumes that they have a solid understanding how the United States fights unconventional warfare and how unconventional warfare principles and characteristics can be implemented in national defense forces development. Moving forward on this assumed understanding, NATO countries might share that countering hybrid warfare is most feasible in the initial phases. What might be an obstacle for U.S. troops that is less problematic for Eastern European NATO countries? Historical and currently existing social and economic ties to and experiences with Russian activities in the region might enable NATO to develop a strategy that counters and deters Russian hybrid warfare.

In the Baltic Sea area of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, or in Southeastern Europe in Moldova, nations contain ethnic Russian populations that make up a high percentage of their total populations. While the numbers of all of these ethnicities position them as minorities, they are still elevating some concern in an event of Russian intervention in the

¹³¹ Porkoláb, 12.

respective countries. The tireless information campaign from Russia attempts to take full advantage of these segments of the population since these people often turn to Russian language news sources for information.

To properly combat hybrid warfare, countries need to take new types of measures independently, but NATO SOF also might need to offer opportunities. NATO SOF offered military solutions alone would not counter the hybrid threat. From the currently identified three core tasks of NATO SOF, military assistance is the preferred element of the solution. NATO must “become a more effective training Alliance.”¹³² Crisis prevention must be a priority instead of crisis management. NATO SOF military assistance is a core task that fits and supports such a quest. Military assistance that includes, “engagement with local, regional, and national leadership or organizations, and civic actions supporting and influencing the local population,”¹³³ might be a sphere to act in.

Shifting forward, NATO SOF military assistance from a peacetime dimension to a gray zone action might be a considerable possibility for both the respective nations and NATO SOF as well. Creation or restructuring of SOF units and their NATO SOF framework would take a considerably longer time and would require a broader mutual shared understanding of hybrid threats in NATO. However, challenges or any fear from structural changes should not stop mutual efforts at countering hybrid warfare.

¹³² NATO, “Secretary General Calls for NATO to Make Training a Core Task for the Alliance in the Fight Against Extremism,” April 6, 2016, accessed May 8, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_129756.htm.

¹³³ NATO, AJP-3.5, 3-1 – 3-2.

The Russian method of hybrid warfare relies on the use of SOF with the capability to leverage and share both language and culture with the primarily targeted population. NATO must provide support on a broad extent to nations' efforts and might adopt a NATO SOF structure and development of units that can have a more direct link to the civilian population and less but not neglected connection to defense or security forces.

Conclusion

NATO SOF must prepare to operate within a noncontiguous battlespace. In such a comprehensive environment SOF can leverage its advantages to be familiar with combined and joint operations and irregular warfare. SOF carries out special operations across the spectrum of conflict (or range of military operations) by performing a variety of capabilities before, during, and after crisis situations. NATO SOF navigates in the age of uncertainty and ambiguity. NATO SOF's engagements with local, regional, and national leadership or organizations in the human domain is critical in hybrid war and its counter initiatives as well. NATO SOF has to ponder the human domain through internal and external, interagency and multinational cooperation and acts.

NATO SOF intelligence activities need to focus on the human dimension and naturally must have flexible information flow and sharing. SOF as the primary training and influential military element of NATO have to support the situational awareness of the Alliance that directly supports timely and meaningful decision making.

In the frame of military assistance, the preparation of host nation for resistance might be a central area for NATO SOF's effort. At the national level, SOF as the primary

military force of counter hybrid activities can be a vigorous strength for a nation's infrastructure and force resilience building.

Contemporary conflicts show that hybrid warfare relies heavily on the use of special or specialized forces. To properly counter hybrid warfare NATO SOF might be considered to provide and organize a similar NATO SOF unit. Qualified NATO SOF units would be dedicated to operate in their respective country while they might be reinforced and backed by a NATO SOF element, for instance like NSHQ. The small team that is tied to the population by ethnicity and language would leverage the team to blend into the area easily. As natives, building trust and identifying required tasks for evolving social or resistance movements would shorten time, provide flexibility, and clear situational awareness for the respective country and NATO SOF.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis has discussed hybrid warfare with the effort to understand it as a realm of the twenty-first century security environment. Therefore, the thesis has attempted to identify the general characteristics of hybrid threats and warfare to provide crucial understanding of the current security environment and reflect on possible required instruments that play significant roles in the hybrid war.

Hybrid warfare is not a new form of warfare. Many scholars assess hybrid warfare as nothing more than an appearance of history that already has been seen many times. However, the author of this paper shares Hoffman's opinion on distinctions between previous conflicts and recent contemporary warfare. Fighting in contemporary hybrid warfare does not require both conventional and unconventional forces. A single adversary can fight hybrid warfare by employing conventional and unconventional tactics. Furthermore, hybrid warfare is more than the presence and use of regular and irregular warfare. It is the combination of the two or even more by adding adaptive and flexible activities or warfare from other instruments' toolboxes. The very aim of hybrid warfare is to keep war below the threshold of a reaction from traditional defense institutions and organizations such as NATO. "The essential purpose of hybrid warfare is to keep an adversary politically, militarily and societally off-balance."¹³⁴ Hybrid warfare primarily targets the adversary's population on the battlefield of "minds" through an extensive information campaign. The contemporary hybrid warfare primarily leverages the human

¹³⁴ Lindley-French, 1.

domain. Conventional forces can be employed in a late phase of hybrid warfare. Therefore, it is a challenge to forecast and respond to hybrid activities in the gray zone quickly enough. Russia's activities in Eastern Ukraine alone might not be called hybrid warfare. However, Russia's overall revisionist strategy that contains and employs different types of warfare has been seen and understood as hybrid warfare in Western society and in NATO. Possible limitations of hybrid warfare are significant potential cost, provision of second and third order of effects, and isolation. Furthermore, sufficient full spectrum hybrid warfare can be waged only against weak and insufficient governments and organizations.

In alignment with the gradually growing understanding of the hybrid environment, the thesis has also addressed the question of key elements and players of hybrid warfare and their roles. Therefore, the roles of nations affected by hybrid warfare, NATO, and NATO SOF were examined in light of the question of how these can complement other instruments of power in a whole of government anti-hybrid campaign.

There is no limitation of actors in hybrid warfare. Both states and non-state actors can carry out hybrid warfare. The weak can fight against the strong but the opposite is also feasible for hybrid warfare. Since there is no unified way to wage hybrid warfare, countering hybrid warfare requires different strategies in which counter activities can be conducted in many different ways. Hybrid warfare primarily targets weak and insufficient governments and organizations, thus open and reliable politics and effective social security are some basic counter measures of hybrid warfare. Targeting vulnerabilities, such as corruption, is a key element of hybrid warfare. Strengthened intelligence, and strong and more open interagency coordination and information sharing are required to

counter hybrid warfare. Contemporary hybrid warfare relies on massive propaganda. Therefore, governments need to strengthen the population's resilience through education and crisis action exercises. One crucial element of counter hybrid warfare is educating and preparing journalists against adversaries' propaganda and disinformation and supporting independent and open information to the population. Better and stronger strategic communications of nations and NATO are also an active countermeasure of hybrid warfare.

NATO needs to strengthen the cohesion of the Alliance by providing open and honest communication between NATO and with other organizations such as the EU by active and close cooperation. With both its political and military capabilities, NATO needs to mitigate and cover existing vulnerabilities and be required to identify and develop adequate means to support member nations' counter hybrid threat activities. An overall NATO anti-hybrid strategy would strengthen the collective defense and would be a base guideline for member nations' force and capabilities development.

NATO needs to specify NATO SOF's activities in hybrid and counter-hybrid warfare. Military assistance, as a NATO SOF core task, might provide the heart of NATO SOF anti-hybrid activities, however, further adjustments would support a more sufficient SOF development in light of the existing scarce defense budgets. Resilience building as a crucial NATO task in hybrid warfare requires NATO SOF to pro-actively support such effort by training, developing, and maintaining "hybrid specialized" NATO SOF units.

Through understanding the environment and the role of key players, the thesis has sought to understand limitations that effect the efficiency of an anti-hybrid campaign.

First, limited defense budgets are a crucial limitation in, but not unique to, hybrid warfare. Some of the obvious consequences are delayed or canceled equipment and training development, and therefore limited readiness of the respective units. In hybrid warfare the time for reaction is extremely shortened. Thus forces, organizations, governments, and populations need to be ready. Pre-planning is necessary and a shared situational awareness united with accurate indication and warning for decision makers is a must. A certain level of readiness needs to be continuously maintained and that requires an appropriately planned and affordable budget.

Second, understanding time as a limiting factor of anti-hybrid warfare is also important. On one hand, the shortened time for the possible reaction to hybrid warfare demands resilience and other effective countermeasures to be in place from the very beginning of hybrid warfare. Sufficient counter hybrid activities are impossible in late phases of the hybrid war. On the other hand, the length of the anti-hybrid warfare is less predictable. Therefore, long, continuous and extensive timelines need to be developed for anti-hybrid strategy and activities. Implementation of a resistance warfare type strategy might be a solution to address hybrid threats in contemporary counter hybrid warfare.

Third, understanding of hybrid warfare is a limiting factor that might delay or disrupt counter hybrid warfare. The complexity and blurriness of hybrid warfare make strategy development and employment of countermeasures tough. Misperception and alternate understanding of the threat can lead to confusion on and between different levels that might delay or mistarget the given response. Misunderstanding or the lack of identification of the threat and activities might alter the given response by time and space (domain) as well.

The thesis's examination of limiting factors has led to address the last question of the possible SOF adaptation approaches in the contemporary security environment. A continuous consideration of ends, ways, and means that have overarched all steps of the work has concluded in a suggestion to utilize NATO SOF actively and more efficiently as the military instrument of power.

The successful anti-hybrid campaign requires more than a military solution only. All the instruments of power need to be in place and operate in concert. Nevertheless, hybrid warfare activities likely occur in the gray zone. Thus, SOF as the most efficient and prepared forces, need to be considered as the primary, but not lone, military means of hybrid warfare. SOF's capability to adapt to and adopt challenges of warfare demands a focused attention from policymakers and military leadership. SOF need to be a priority of nations' and NATO's military force and capability development to maintain and increase readiness for employment. Providing situational awareness, psychological operations, cyber, and military information support operations capabilities; being the link among militaries, host nation or indigenous forces, and the population are some of the factors that place SOF beyond any conventional forces in hybrid warfare and counter hybrid strategy.

This thesis set forth to answer the question, how does one shape NATO SOF to integrate them into a whole of government approach in an anti-hybrid campaign? The conclusion is that NATO SOF needs to be shaped as the primary military instrument of power of an anti-hybrid campaign that is integrated into a whole of government (Alliance) approach via a comprehensive manner.

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